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Parts and Wholes in Long Non-narrative Poems of the Eighteenth Century

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DECLARATIONS

This dissertation does not exceed 80,000 words, including footnotes and references but excluding the bibliography.

The dissertation is written and formatted in compliance with *MHRA Style Guide*.

The dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines early-eighteenth-century understandings of literary length in order to shed new light on the structures of three long non-narrative poems of the period, James Thomson's *The Seasons*, Mark Akenside's *The Pleasures of Imagination* and Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*. Readings of these poems demonstrate the sophistication with which British eighteenth-century writers used extensive literary structures to represent, explicate and communicate objects and ideas that seemed too vast or complex for comprehensive description or narration.

Part I of the dissertation surveys, in chronological order, earlier and contemporary critical theories which inform the three poems, in particular those found in the writings of two major Whig critics, John Dennis and Joseph Addison (discussed in Chapter 1) and in the poetry of Alexander Pope (Chapter 2). Considered collectively, these may be understood to describe a 'poetics of greatness' whereby extensive verse is progressively abstracted from its traditional generic loci and becomes associated more broadly with ambitions and potential failures of comprehensive representation and perception, with the sublime, and with playful or witty complexity.

Part II covers the three long poems. Chapter 3 argues that in *The Seasons* Thomson uses the figure of the maze to modulate allusively between stasis and motion, sublimity and playfulness, gesturing circumspectly towards a vast providential order. Chapter 4 offers close readings of two early Akenside poems and passages from Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, a key source for *The Pleasures of Imagination*. These reveal Akenside's abiding concern with the fine line distinguishing sublime inspiration

from ridiculous delusion, which informs self-reflexively the very structure of his sublime long poem. In Chapter 5, perceptions of *Night Thoughts* as too long provide the starting point for an account of how Young's belief in the didactic function of poetry translates into a temporal, cumulative poetics designed to wear its repetitive *aperçus* on 'life, death and immortality', through the time of reading, into the heart of the reader.

Just as in extensive classical genres like epic and georgic, these works invest structure with the task of transmitting an articulated experience or body of knowledge to the reader. As such, their parts are arranged coherently, if complexly, within the whole.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents and to my husband.

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

Full citations are provided for most works when they first appear and abbreviated versions thereafter; for primary works the place of publication is London unless otherwise stated. The following works and titles are referred to throughout by abbreviations. Citations from the Bible are from the King James Version.

Primary works

Dennis, *Critical Works*	Dennis, John, *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, ed. by Edward Niles Hooker, 2 vols (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1943)
FQ	Spenser, Edmund, *The Faerie Qveene*, ed. by A. C. Hamilton, rev. edn (Harlow: Longman, 2007)
Lives	Johnson, Samuel, *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets: with Critical Observations on their Works*, ed. by Roger Lonsdale, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006)
PL	Milton, John, *Paradise Lost*, ed. by Alastair Fowler, rev. 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Longman, 2007)
The Spectator	Addison, Steele, et al., *The Spectator*, ed. by Donald F. Bond, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press)
TE	Pope, Alexander, *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. by John Butt, 11 vols (London: Methuen; New Haven: Yale UP, 1950-1969)

Journals and online resources

For citations of online texts, either unique URLs or unique document numbers are given in the 'Bibliography'

ECCO	*Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, Gale Group <http://find.galegroup.com/ecco>
EEBO	*Early English Books Online*, Chadwyck <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>
ELH	*English Literary History*
ELN	*English Language Notes*

(B)JECS	*(British) Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*
MLN	*Modern Language Notes*
MLQ	*Modern Language Quarterly*
N&Q	*Notes and Queries*
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online at <http://www.odnb.com>)
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, based on 2nd ed. (1989) (online at <http://www.oed.com>)
SEL	*Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*

PART I: THEORY AND PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION
THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LONG POEM AS LEVIATHAN: CRITICAL CONTEXTS

> I find that I cannot exist without poetry, without eternal poetry; half the day will not do, the whole of it. I began with a little, but habit has made me a Leviathan.[1]

This dissertation explores how parts relate to their 'great' or extensive wholes in three long non-narrative poems of the eighteenth century, James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726-46), Mark Akenside's *The Pleasures of Imagination* (1744), and Edward Young's *The Complaint; Night-Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality* (1742-46).[2] The inquiry is introduced in Part I with a survey of the critical theory and poetic practice of earlier authors – namely John Dennis, Joseph Addison and Alexander Pope – which, I will argue, viewed collectively describe a 'poetics of greatness' that suggests specific techniques for rendering literal and figurative greatness in text and for ordering large literary structures. In Addison and Pope in particular, this set of ideas is closely implicated with particular understandings of how long poems can (or should) be read,

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[1] Keats to John Reynolds, 17-18 April, 1817. John Keats, *Selected Letters*, rev. edn (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard UP, 2002), pp. 15-18 (p. 17).

[2] The range of years given for the publication of *The Seasons* and *Night Thoughts* indicate slightly different stages of publication. That for *Night Thoughts* refers to the dates of publication for the first and final 'Nights' respectively, but the last part of *The Seasons*, 'Autumn', was in fact published in 1730, as was a complete edition. However, since Thomson continued to make substantial revisions and additions thereafter (unlike Young), and the 1746 edition contains the greatest number of lines, it seems reasonable to give that year as the final publication date. (Akenside also revised *The Pleasures of Imagination* following its initial publication, and seems to have made alterations to every subsequent edition up until 1754, but since the number of lines and books remained constant 1744 may stand alone as the date of publication). Details of publication history for the respective poems can most conveniently be found in modern editions: James Thomson, *The Seasons*, ed. by James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), Mark Akenside, 'The Pleasures of the Imagination', in *The Poetical Works of Mark Akenside*, ed. by Robin Dix (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), pp. 85-174, Edward Young, *Night Thoughts*, ed. by Stephen Cornford (Cambridge: CUP, 1989). Unless otherwise stated, these editions will be used throughout.

how they act on their readers, and how they might represent the complex and vast in nature, whether divine or human. The self-reflexive concern with form and its apprehension also operates within the three long poems, which are discussed in Part II. By taking them as case studies, I aim to extend our understanding of how British eighteenth-century writers used the long poem to represent and explicate objects and ideas that seemed to exceed comprehension, employing literary form – that is, 'the *disposition, arrangement, or order of parts*' – as a method of communicating greatness and complexity.[3] While the structure of these poems may seem obscure to us now – and was perhaps equally so to many early readers – their complex formal articulations are nonetheless meaningful. Understood as such the poems offer us new pleasures and new insights into the culture of the period.

(i) Greatness in poetry

In Alexander Pope's *Epistle to Lord Burlington* the failure to distinguish between literal and qualitative varieties of greatness leaves Timon 'shiv'ring' like a 'puny insect' in the massive estate he has built, and exhausting rather than impressing his guests:

> My Lord advances with majestic mien,
> Smit with the mighty pleasure, to be seen:
> But soft – by regular approach – not yet –
> First thro' the length of yon hot Terrace sweat,
> And when up ten steep slopes you've dragg'd your thighs,
> Just as his Study-door he'll bless your eyes.[4]

[3] W.Tatarkiewicz, 'Form in the History of Aesthetics', in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, ed. Philip P. Wiener, 5 vols (New York: Scribner, 1973), vol. ii, pp. 216-225 (p. 216).
[4] Alexander Pope, 'Epistle to Burlington', *TE*, III.ii, pp. 127-156 (ll. 127-132).

This is greatness turned inside out so that it traces its inverse, and as such Timon's palace is the architectural equivalent of the vacuous mass of the Grub Street dunces' literary productions. Rather than exhibiting an ingeniously ordered plenitude that 'pleasingly confounds,/ Surprizes, varies, and conceals the Bounds', the 'regular' 'length' of the terrace represents extent denuded of either taste or sense.[5] Dragging himself through this vast abode the visitor is submitted to a course of discomfort and tedium that resembles the pointless, pseudo-heroic trials in *The Dunciad*; the prize – the 'blessing' of his host's company – will no doubt compound the physical weariness by weighting his eyelids with the lead of Dulness.

If Timon's villa were a book, it would not be a fine vellum-clad volume from his own study but rather one of the tomes 'of amplest size,/ Redeem'd from tapers and defrauded pies' (155-6) that Bays takes to build his altar to the goddess.[6] By Pope's mocking account the extent of de Lyra or Holland, like the length of Timon's terrace, relates by an inverse ratio to aesthetic and moral value. What, then, of length in poetry? At the start of the *Moral Essays* an epigraph taken from Horace specifies that for poetry 'you need terseness, to let the thought run freely on/ without becoming entangled in a mass of words that will hang/ heavy on the ear.'[7] As John Barrell points out, however, '[m]ore than any other century, the eighteenth century was the age of the long poem: it

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[5] Ibid., ll. 55-6.

[6] *The Dunciad in Four Books*, ed. by Valerie Rumbold (Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education (Longman), 1999),Book I, ll. 155-6.

[7] 'Est brevitate opus, ut currat sententia, neu se/ Impediat verbis lassas onerantibus aures', Horace, *Satires* I. x, ll. 9-10. English translation from Horace, 'Epistles', in *Horace: Satires and Epistles; Persius: Satires*, trans. Niall Rudd, rev. 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 35-38 (ll. 9-11). The epigraph first appears at the head of 'Moral Essays in Four Epistles to Several Persons' in the posthumously published *Works of Alexander Pope Esq. In Nine Volumes Complete. With his Last Corrections, Additions, and Improvements*, ed. by William Warburton, 9 vols (1751), vol. iii, pp. 106-207 (p. 106).

was by writing at length that poetic reputations were made.'[8] Pope's, indeed, was arguably established by his translation of the *Iliad*, the longest poem of them all, in which 'great' and related words are used intensively.[9] Clearly, extent and greatness might, in canonical works like Homer's epics, be associated without undue damage to either. Nonetheless, as Isobel Grundy and, more recently, Freya Johnston have shown, eighteenth-century literature frequently depicts relations between literal and figurative scales of measurement as complex and unstable; although it is rarely addressed directly by either contemporary authors or modern scholars, one might expect the same to be true of the relation between poetry's physical dimensions and its aesthetic or moral value.[10]

With this context in mind, the present dissertation sets out to re-examine early- and mid-eighteenth-century theorizations of and attempts at extensive verse. Via readings of important critical theory and poetic examples, I aim to discover what aesthetic or moral values eighteenth-century authors and readers thought the dimensions of long poems could, or should, embody. Modulating between the physical and the figurative dimensions, form is crucial to this project and therefore the following also looks for indications of the kinds of order that might ensure the poetic equivalent of '[p]arts answ'ring parts' so as to 'slide into a whole' and thereby delight and instruct, rather than weary, the reader.[11]

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[8] John Barrell, *Poetry, Language and Politics* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988), p. 79.
[9] Arthur Sherbo's frequency lists give 'great' as the fifth most commonly used word in the *Iliad*. Arthur Sherbo, *Frequency Lists of Alexander Pope's Translation of Homer's Iliad [Text from the Twickenham Edition of Pope's Poetry]* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, Computer Center, 1972).
[10] Isobel Grundy, *Samuel Johnson and the Scale of Greatness* (Leicester: Leicester UP, 1986), passim; see for e.g. p. 6, where Grundy quotes a different part of the Timon passage in 'Epistle to Burlington'. Johnston explores the complex of values, literal and metaphoric, that Samuel Johnson attaches to 'lowness' and 'littleness', in the context of earlier and contemporary literature. Freya Johnston, *Samuel Johnson and the Art of Sinking, 1709-1791* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), see pp. 13-17, pp. 63-7.
[11] 'Epistle to Burlington', l. 66.

(ii) 'Analyzing whales': reading the eighteenth-century long poem

In *The Daring Muse* Margaret Doody comments that '[m]ost mid-twentieth-century readers are trained first and trained best in reading short poems, modern or metaphysical', and the methods involved have little to say about the kinds of poetic form that might be manifested on a larger scale.[12] In the twenty-first century, Jenny Davidson, thinking of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, not only suggests that 'we seem cognitively ill-suited to practice' formalist analyses on long texts, but notes that we are particularly poorly equipped to address those that cannot be 'reduced to plot'.[13] Long non-narrative poetry neither conforms to modern expectations of what poetry should look like, nor lends itself to the types of formal analysis most commonly practised by modern critics. How, then, have modern critics responded to the formal characteristics of *The Seasons*, *The Pleasures of Imagination*, *Night Thoughts* and other long poems of the same period? John Sitter, who examines all three poems in a chapter entitled 'The Long Poem Obstructed', starts by commenting that

> [s]uccessful long poems are so rare in the history of literature, the odds against their conception and survival so high, that investing them with normative value may be like trying to judge the ocean solely by analyzing whales. Always appearing on the verge of extinction, long poems fascinate largely because of their rarity, even improbability[14]

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[12] Margaret Anne Doody, *The Daring Muse: Augustan Poetry Reconsidered* (Cambridge: CUP, 1985), p. 57.
[13] Jenny Davidson, 'Form and Eighteenth-Century Studies: Form Revisited'. Paper given at the 43rd Annual Meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, March 23rd, 2012. I am grateful to Professor Davidson for transmitting her script to me and for her permission to cite from it.
[14] John Sitter, *Literary Loneliness in Mid-Eighteenth Century England* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982), p. 157.

The issue, however, is not merely one of determining the significance of these particular long poems to the wider literary culture in which they were composed. It is also, for Sitter, a problem of 'conflicting appeals within the poems', which manifest themselves as a difficulty in 'reading [them] on their own terms'. 'Speaking very generally we could say that the leisure of length is at odds with the poets' desire for intensity or momentary sublimity'; whole and part are incompatible.[15]

Designed to bridge the cultural distance between long poems of the mid eighteenth century and a twentieth-century literary-historical tradition that marginalizes them, this account of modern readers' difficulty with the poems is itself implicated in modern critical assumptions. Given the prominence of long poems in the eighteenth-century literary landscape (or seascape, to be consistent), the claim that most long poems are unsuccessful, and that the few which do succeed are therefore unrepresentative, seems based not on Sitter's study of eighteenth-century poetry but rather on modern understandings of what poetry should look like or achieve. The perception of the relation between parts and whole as problematic also reflects critical values and practices that develop in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including the Romantic concept of poetry as a momentary sublimity.[16] Armed with such standards, it seems inevitable that modern critics should continue to discover 'obstructions', and Sitter accordingly turns away from the apparent dead end in order to contextualize the 'problem' he has identified. While sublime local effects are seen to conflict with the diffuse 'leisureliness' of length, he argues that the latter dimension is nonetheless

[15] Sitter, *Literary Loneliness*, p. 158.
[16] Catherine Gallagher identifies a modern 'disregard, if not an outright abhorrence, of length', and suggests that such attitudes first emerge in critical theory of the Romantic period, such as that of Shelley, where poetry is seen as a concentration of affect or experience within the instantaneous and the fleeting. Catherine Gallagher, 'Formalism and Time', *MLQ*, 61:1 (2000), 299-51 (p. 232, 233-239).

connected with grandeur if not sublimity, that of ambition and scope: 'it is likely that a long, comprehensive poem will in the end be a poetic theodicy, whether because of Milton's influence or because long poems naturally imply a whole picture of the world which they figure.'[17]

The poems don't just 'imply' a 'whole picture of the world', however. Doody claims that Augustan poetry in general not only values extensive over 'short verse', but is characterized by a preference for 'large' topics, 'capable of almost infinite extension to include all sorts of other topics', a kind of quantitative equivalent of the well-rehearsed Augustan promotion of the general over the particular.[18] *The Seasons, The Pleasures of Imagination* and *Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality* epitomize such preferences. Taken as summary descriptions of the contents, their titles present the reader with vast totalities: the whole of nature and its cyclical processes, all the pleasurable contents and activity of the imagination, and the infinite span of human existence. The length of the poems underscores these promises, attesting to the abundance on offer. Furthermore, while Sitter turns from his suggestive comments on form in order to discuss how long poems ultimately reject history and society, theodicy is surely an outward-looking genre, motivated by didactic intentions and taking a scientific and theological focus. Later critics have argued that the poems, too, are less than self-contained in their epistemological perspectives, and have re-oriented scholarly attention by means of a broadly 'new historicist' focus, which links expansive texts to their expansive topics and draws on their ideological contexts, their generic inheritances, and their presentations in print in order to suggest how they mediate modern realities.

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[17] Sitter, *Literary Loneliness*, pp. 157-8.
[18] Doody, *The Daring Muse*, pp. 17, 57.

John Barrell's landmark study, *English Literature in History*, describes contemporary perceptions of the rapid changes under way in eighteenth-century British society: classes, professions and trades were proliferating, manufacturing and mercantile activity increasing, and the problem of comprehending the state of the nation as a whole was understood to be acute. In the arts, one way of re-imaging this confusing multiplicity was the 'frequent eighteenth-century image of

> society [...] as landscape painting, in which the various objects in the view, in which light and shade, may appear in one perspective to be in no relation or even to be in conflict with one another, but can, from the correct viewpoint, be seen in 'just harmony and proportion'[19]

To discover its proportion and unity, we must occupy, as it were, a position outside the landscape. This 'disinterested' perspective, Barrell continues, was typically attributed to the Shaftesburian 'gentleman', who 'having no need to follow any determinate occupation, had the potential to comprehend them all, if not in their specific detail.'[20] Barrell thus reads Thomson's *The Seasons* in terms of how its speaker forms the landscape via his perception of it, imposing a pleasing order that simultaneously reinforces the values of a landed ruling class.[21] In the process, the various classes whose

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[19] John Barrell, *English Literature in History 1730-80: An Equal, Wide Survey* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1983), p. 31.

[20] Ibid. Extending Barrell's insights to the developing discipline of literary criticism, Douglas Lane Patey gives the example of the eighteenth-century critic John Harris, who ''solves' the problem of his contradictory vantage' (is he 'part of the unfolding of events' he describes or can he stand 'above and outside' them?) 'through a confidence that the interests of his part and of the whole are fundamentally the same'. Douglas Lane Patey, 'The Institution of Criticism in the Eighteenth Century', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Volume 4: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. by H.B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson, vol. 4 of 9 (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), pp. 3-31, p. 26.

[21] Barrell, *Equal, Wide Survey*, pp. 51-79.

labour shapes the land and makes it productive are either omitted from the picture or re-introduced in aestheticized form, as ornamentation.[22]

While the long poem is only one of the art-forms discussed in *English Literature in History*, Barrell engages with it more directly in a later essay co-authored by Harriet Guest, which understands the category of the 'eighteenth century long poem' as pertaining to a specific set of works, all of which seem to be characterized not only by extensiveness, but by their now canonical status and (although this feature goes un-remarked) by their lack of overarching plot or narrative. The essay restates some of the ideas presented in Barrell's earlier reading of *The Seasons*, but it also addresses the 'problem' of the long poem from the perspective of generic transformation:

> From the beginning of the eighteenth century, what were perceived as new forms of poetry began to be invented, and we can see their invention as a response to a pervasive sense that some of the older genres, epic and pastoral in particular, were incapable of representing the nature of the modern world, the diversity, as it was understood to be, of modern European society. The heroes of epic were now unimaginable, for the essential condition of epic heroism was that the hero should somehow represent, within himself, all the members of his society. But the proliferation of interests and occupational identities within a commercial society meant that no individual could now fulfil that representative task.[23]

Instead, other classical genres, such as the verse epistle and the didactic poem (especially georgic), were found more hospitable to modern variety and abundance, being 'ventilated by digressions' and thematically 'rangy'. Furthermore, since 'no critic had methodized' these genres,

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[22] My summary here synthesizes the readings in *English Literature in History* with insights found in another study by the same author: John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: the Rural Poor in English Painting 1730-1840* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983), pp. 37-41, 44.

[23] John Barrell and Harriet Guest, 'On the Use of Contradiction: Economics and Morality in the Eighteenth-century Long Poem', in *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature*, ed. by Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (New York ; London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 121-43 (pp. 132-3).

> they could even be combined with each other, or with other genres, to produce the characteristic vehicle of eighteenth-century poetry, the poem of mixed genre, variously mingling satire, the epistle, and the didactic poem whether philosophical or georgic.[24]

The authors go on to suggest that the mingling of formally expansive and open genres permits the logical contradictions exhibited by these poems, which apparently went un-remarked by contemporary readers, to function as a means of hegemonic consolidation, 'knotting' together the 'contradictory nature of the ideologies' they encode.[25]

Barrell's analyses of eighteenth-century long poems inform almost every later account of them, especially in the case of *The Seasons*. One strand – represented by critics like Tim Fulford and Suvir Kaul – has extended and complicated Barrell's enquiries into the ideological formations embedded in long poems by attending to a wider range of passages within the individual poems and by viewing them in the context of other historical developments, including Britain's emergence as an imperial power.[26] Genre, too, has become an important parameter in recent inquiries, such as that by Kevis Goodman into the use of the georgic 'mode' to mediate the unprecedented increase in scientific knowledge and sensory data in *The Seasons* and of rapid historical change and 'news' in William Cowper's *The Task* (1784).[27] Although the primary focus of the present study lies elsewhere, the ways in which these scholars have situated eighteenth-century long poems within the context of contemporary social, political and cultural

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[24] Ibid., p. 133.
[25] Ibid., pp. 127, 132.
[26] Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth-Century* (London: UP of Virginia, 2000), pp. 131-182; Tim Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority: Poetry, Criticism and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 18-39.
[27] Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), *passim*.; see also the enquiry into generic mixtures in *The Seasons* in Sandro Jung, 'Epic, Ode, or Something New: The Blending of Genres in Thomson's Spring', *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature*, 43 (2007), 146-65.

developments and debates has nonetheless been crucial to my explorations of the poems' forms.

Another significant feature of the essay by Barrell and Guest is its attention to how the poems were presented to their early audiences. They consider the original works' paratexts, the prose prefaces, 'Arguments' and 'Designs' which direct readers' engagements with the verse and which emphasize both the poems' 'rational development' and their 'variety'. They therefore posit a contemporary criticism that 'legitimates a new notion of what makes a work coherent', and understands 'unity' as coherence rather than consistency.[28] Consolidating these insights, Richard Terry's article 'Transitions and Digressions' shows that these forms of interpolated connection or disjunction were central to eighteenth-century understandings of long poems, representing opportunities for the poet to demonstrate his skill and foci for readers' appreciation.[29] He concludes, however, that '[m]y argument here has been neither that eighteenth-century long poems are riven by inconsistencies nor that they preserve some residual formal unity. My principal claim has been that poets had at their disposal an aesthetic lexicon sensitized to, and facilitatingly equivocal about, matters of aesthetic integrity' (508). Rather than offering any detailed readings of long poems, then, the article amounts to a manifesto, advocating increased attention to the 'transitions' of long eighteenth-century poems as a means of understanding the complexities of Augustan culture.

The present study is, in a sense, a response to this call-to-arms. However, rather than zoning in on transitions and digressions as points which 'knot' together

[28] Barrell and Guest, 'On the Use of Contradictions', pp. 135-6.
[29] Richard Terry, 'Transitions and Digressions in the Eighteenth-Century Long Poem', *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* 32:3 (1992 Summer), 495-510 (pp. 500-501).

contradictory discourses or conflicting impulses within eighteenth-century culture, I will instead be looking at how form in eighteenth-century long poems itself mediates (to use Kevis Goodman's term) between different varieties of greatness, whether literal or figurative, Christian or classical, spatial or temporal. I will also be claiming, against Terry's disavowal, that long poems of the period do indeed retain 'some residual form of unity.' The arrangements of parts within the wholes of the works under discussion were not merely conceived of as 'textile' tissues of conjunctions; their authors, as Doody's remarks remind us, also had ambitions of reproducing and communicating *in full* the bulk and sublimity of the immense bodies of knowledge and experience – divine, natural, psychological – that existed outside of the world of print.

(iii) Great topics and great texts: a leviathan inheritance

As we have seen, recent scholarship on the eighteenth-century long poem links its popularity to contemporary increases of 'variety' in the social, economic, military, scientific and cultural spheres, and represents it as a pre-eminently modern genre that replaces rule-bound genres like epic with mixed forms of a more open kind. Transitions and digressions, we are told, not only 'knot together' the sometimes contradictory discourses which were used to make sense of such proliferations, but also become an occasion for poetic ingenuity on the part of the authors, and for tasteful appreciation on the part of readers. However, although the dexterity of carefully crafted transitions was clearly of interest to both authors and readers, great variety is not quite the same thing as greatness. *The Seasons*, *The Pleasures of Imagination* and *Night Thoughts* are, after all, unambiguously invested in the discourse of the sublime, which in Longinus's account is

rooted in readings of texts that claim immediate and permanent authority – classical epic and biblical verse – by which heroic or divine greatness is transmitted to the reader. If epic itself becomes a problematic undertaking for eighteenth-century poets, many of the features which were seen to characterize the genre – including length and grandeur – continue to be valued. Equally, whilst overtly religious poetry may not feature prominently in our current canon of Augustan literature, and although ecclesiastical control of culture was on the wane throughout the century, the Bible remained central to print culture of the period. These older literary traditions offered the eighteenth century other ways of thinking about the arrangement of parts within extensive poetic wholes.

It is also important to emphasize that the poems under discussion don't just promise abundance or reflect contemporary 'variety'; they also make good on this promise by encapsulating, within their own extents, descriptions or accounts of physically immense scenes, objects, and creatures. In *Night Thoughts*, for instance, a future, supernatural vista of infinite space is evoked by a simile in which the proverbially immense Leviathan swills particles of 'little Life' without even noticing:

> How shall the stranger Man's illumin'd Eye,
> In the vast Ocean of unbounded Space,
> Behold an Infinite of floating Worlds
> Divide the Crystal Waves of Ether pure,
> In endless Voyage, without Port? The *least*
> Of these disseminated Orbs, how Great?
> Great as they are, what Numbers These surpass
> Huge, as *Leviathan*, to that small Race,
> Those twinkling Multitudes of little Life,
> He swallows unperceiv'd?[30]

[30] Young, *Night Thoughts*, VI, ll. 176-85.

This passage is emblematic of how older – in this case, biblical – discourses persisted within more recent physico-theological theorizations of greatness based on the discoveries of the New Science: through the Newtonian universe, in the form of a simile, swims a beast from the Old Testament. By the eighteenth century this enormous creature trails a complex set of associations, which collectively tell us quite a bit about the aesthetic and moral values attached to physical magnitude or greatness, and the ways in which it relates to text, extensive or otherwise. This section of the 'Introduction', therefore, sketches a brief prehistory of its life in literature, using it as a lens or heuristic device by which to isolate ideas about extensive form, physical and poetic, which remain in play throughout the time-span covered by this dissertation.

Young's Leviathan is, in the first instance, taken from the Book of Job, of which he wrote a poetic paraphrase in 1719.[31] In the Old Testament original, the Lord berates Job in what is, effectively, a satirical *reductio*:

> Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down?
> Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn?
> Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft words unto thee?
> Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever?
> Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?
> Shall the companions make a banquet of him? shall they part him among the merchants?[32]

In the verses that follow, divine speech effortlessly fragments the creature's body, anatomizing it to form a sequence of superlatives:

> I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion.

[31] Edward Young, *A Paraphrase on Part of the Book of Job* (1719) in *ECCO* [accessed 16 April, 2010]
[32] Job 41:1-6.

> […]
> His scales are his pride, shut together as with a close seal.
> One is so near to another, that no air can come between them.
> They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered.
> By his neesings a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning.
> Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out.
> Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron.
> His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth.
> In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him
> The flakes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved.
> His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone.
> When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid[33]

The scales, neck, heart and flakes of flesh are utterly fused as far as man is concerned, but in the divine utterance the whole body is divided among the several verses, blazon-like, fitting the immense whole to mortal, temporal measures. The Lord, that is, makes the vast available in poetry. Thus, in Psalms 74, his munificence can be praised in human song: 'Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, [and] gavest him [to be] meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness'.[34]

This leviathan becomes a popular topos for eighteenth-century poets of the religious sublime, who responded to the Longinian celebration of the bible as sublime poetry by producing numerous paraphrases not only of the book singled out in *Peri Hypsous*, Genesis, but of Psalms and, like Young, of Job.[35] However, Longinus's theorization of greatness draws primarily on classical critical and literary sources, and

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[33] Job 41:12, 15-25.
[34] Job 74:14.
[35] Examples of Jobean verse paraphrase include: Sir Richard Blackmore, *A Paraphrase on the Book of Job* (1700); David Baker, *The History of Job: A Sacred Poem. In Five Books* (1706); William Thompson, *A Poetical Paraphrase on Part of the Book of Job: in Imitation of the Style of Milton* (1726); and the anonymous *The Complaint of Job* (1734). For verse paraphrases of Psalms 74 and 104 see *A Select Collection of the Psalms of David, as Imitated or Paraphrased by the Most Eminent English Poets* (1756). David Morris deliberately sets eighteenth-century biblical paraphrase to one side in *The Religious Sublime*. Abigail Williams provides a brief survey of early eighteenth-century religious verse, with some focus on biblical paraphrase, in order to demonstrate the importance of the 'religious sublime' as the mode through which 'the first Whig writers began to articulate their desire for an elevated native poetry'. Abigail Williams, *Poetry and the Creation of a Whig Literary Culture, 1681-1714* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), pp. 182-3.

perhaps the most influential classical account of magnitude is found in the *Poetics*, where Aristotle explains the appropriate length for epic and tragedy by means of an analogy whose influence percolates via Renaissance treatments of the *Poetics* through the numerous neoclassical theories of epic down to the eighteenth century:[36]

> there could not be a beautiful animal which was either miniscule (as contemplation of it, occurring in an almost imperceptible moment, has no distinctness) or gigantic (as contemplation of it has no cohesion, but those who contemplate it lose a sense of unity and wholeness), say an animal a thousand miles long. So just as with our bodies and with animals beauty requires magnitude, but magnitude that allows coherent perception, likewise plots require length, but length that can be coherently remembered.[37]

The appropriate 'length', here, is one which allows 'coherent perception', a definition that provides Aristotle with a means of theorizing the overlap in poetry of the temporal and the spatial manifestations of 'length'. First, poems are compared to human and animal bodies, and 'length' is equated with physical size. At the extreme of smallness, however, the 'miniscule', perception of the object becomes impossible, and 'distinctness' is lost – not due to a failure of the senses but because it takes too little time to view and the eye (or mind) fails to register the experience. Thus, the experience of physical (spatial) size occurs *in time*, a transference which is most vivid and problematic at the extremes. Once the comparison returns to the referent, poetry, the problem of perception is transformed into a challenge of memory, and the spatial dimension becomes less prominent. However, it is interesting to note that in both cases, the correct 'size' is

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[36] See Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 62. For more on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century theories of epic see Hugh Thomas Swedenberg, *The Theory of the Epic in England, 1650-1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1944), pp. 21-62.

[37] Aristotle, *On the Art of Fiction: "The Poetics"*, trans. L.J. Potts, repr. edn (Cambridge: CUP, 1953), pp. 55-56. See ---, *Poetics*, trans. Malcolm Heath (London: Penguin, 1996), p. 14, for an alternative modern rendering.

defined in relation to human faculties – perception and memory – a focus that, as we will see, fits in well with the empiricist emphasis of early eighteenth-century aesthetics.[38] Thus, in a 1705 translation of the *Poetics*, 'the larger Extent any Piece has, the finer it will be, provided it be not so large, that the Subject cannot be Comprehended all at once; *and so the Prospect of it, be amazed and Confounded*'.[39] Length, in this version, is implicitly related to the greatness of epic topic or theme insisted on by neoclassical critics.[40] Furthermore, the case of the animal that is too big – the contemplation of which has no unity or wholeness – is transformed from an instance of non-communication into one that almost reproduces the effect of the sublime, which, as Longinus states, should evoke 'Extasy and Surprize'.[41]

(iv) Hobbes's *Leviathan*

In both Job and the *Poetics*, then, the vast is represented in poetry as a temporal sequence. The way in which these accounts of magnitude inflect early modern poetic practice and theory may be seen in two authors of the seventeenth century who would have a profound influence on early eighteenth-century theories of poetry: John Milton and Thomas Hobbes. They both draw on biblical discourse and classical rhetoric and criticism, but as Richard Kroll points out, they 'adapted […] ancient models only by first distancing and examining them from a methodical perspective […] Thus, the way a text

[38] My discussions of Aristotle's animal and Job's leviathan are both indebted to the account of 'the gigantic' in Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1993), pp. 70-103.
[39] Aristotle, *Aristotle's Art of Poetry. Translated from the Original Greek, According to Mr. Theodore Goulston's Edition. Together, with Mr. D'acier's Notes Translated from the French.* (1705), p. 106 [author's emphases].
[40] Swedenberg, *The Theory of the Epic in England, 1650-1800*, p. 169.
[41] *An Essay upon Sublime, translated from the Greek of Dionysius Longinus Cassius; compar'd with the French of le Sieur Despreux Boileau* (Oxford, 1698) in *EEBO* [accessed June 2012], p. 3.

such as *Leviathan* or *Paradise Lost* behaves can become the main subject matter of that text, or can qualify the assertions it makes in other ways.'[42] As we will see, such 'behavioural' self-reflexivity is central to how the long poems of Thomson, Akenside and Young use extended form to transmit greatness. In the final two parts of this Introduction, therefore, brief surveys of how these authors represent the relation between greatness and language will set out some of the main themes and ideas governing the chapters in Parts I and II.

The first thing to notice, however, is the difference between seventeenth-century representations of leviathan and those of the eighteenth century. Whereas Young and the many other contemporary writers who use leviathan as a figure for greatness base their descriptions on Psalms and Job, seventeenth-century writers often conflate these verses with one in Isaiah, where 'leviathan' is a name for satan: 'In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even Leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that [is] in the sea'.[43] Thus, in a 1615 sermon by Thomas Adams, 'the Arch. Pyrate of all is the Deuill; that huge Leuiathan, that takes his pleasure in this sea'.[44] In this period, therefore, the vast creature is not merely a comparative figure by which to illustrate supernatural extent and might but also carries negative associations, so that its size becomes also an anti-type of divine greatness. Both Milton and Hobbes make use of this second leviathan.

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[42] Richard Kroll, *The Material Word: Literate Culture in the Restoration and Early Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1991), p. 2.
[43] Isaiah 27:1.
[44] Thomas Adams, *The Blacke Devil or the Apostate. Together with the Wolfe worrying the Lambes. And the Spiritual Navigator, Bound for the Holy Land. In Three Sermons* (1615) in *EEBO* [accessed November 2010], pp. 24-25. Adams, a Church of England clergyman dubbed by Robert Southey 'the prose Shakespeare of puritan theologians', was in fact 'a Calvinist episcopalian rather than a puritan' (J. Sears McGee, 'Thomas Adams 1583–1652', *ODNB*).

The biblical source of the title to Hobbes's most famous work, *Leviathan*, stands in provocative contrast to his controversial account of biblical authority. He specifies that he has taken the title's

> comparison out of the two last verses of the one and fortieth chapter of Job; where God having set forth the great power of Leviathan, calleth him King of the Proud. *There is nothing*, saith he, *on earth, to be compared with him. He is made so as not to be afraid. Hee seeth every high thing below him; and is King of all the children of pride.* But […] he is mortalle, and subject to decay, as all other Earthly creatures are; and because there is that in heaven, (though not on earth) that he should stand in fear of, and whose Lawes he ought to obey[45]

This is consistent with the description in the work's 'Introduction' of 'that great Leviathan called a Common-Wealth, or State […] which is but an Artificiall Man; though of greater stature and strength than the Naturall' (9). The emphasis on great 'stature and strength' evokes the Book of Job, as does the wordplay on 'Body Politic' that follows, whereby the various parts of the state are compared to the different body parts and characteristics of the creature in a manner which echoes the Jobean anatomy in 41:15-24. However, as Roger Lund (among others) points out, Hobbes's 'heterodox' rhetoric is dense with 'dissimulation, irreverent skepticism, ironic indirection and epigrammatic wit'.[46] The witty ambiguity of his 'metaphoricall' style suggests that he is well aware of the contemporary currency of the Isaiahan leviathan. In fact, 'that great Leviathan' echoes the formulae of contemporary sermons and tracts (of all confessional colours)

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[45] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. by Richard Tuck (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), p. 221. All further references to *Leviathan* refer to this edition and are given within the main text.

[46] Roger D. Lund, 'The Bite of Leviathan: Hobbes and Philosophic Drollery', *ELH*, 65 (1998), 825-55 (p. 826). See also ---, "Kickshews of Similitude': Hobbes and the Subterfuge of Style', *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era*, 1 (1994), 197-226; David Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Cultural Transformation* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton UP, 1986), p. 67; and Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), *passim*.

which use the phrase to refer to Satan, giving further ambiguous resonance to the Hobbes's mention of the 'King of all the children of Pride'.[47]

In *Leviathan* the grounds of biblical authority are steadily undermined throughout the text, and the resulting portrait of mankind, collectively and individually, as self-serving, fearful and power-hungry, resembles that of a post-Edenic people bereft of the illuminations of the prophets or the salvation of Christ, chained to the here and now, and utterly ignorant of their prelapsarian glory. Juxtaposing the title and the scriptural quotation used to gloss it (221) with the materialism of the argument, Hobbes's account of perception can thus be read as a description of the clouded vision of unregenerate humanity. Just as he emphasizes that the leviathan of the commonwealth 'is mortalle, and subject to decay,' (ibid.) so Hobbes describes the operations of the mind in terms of 'sense', the data of perception, 'decaying' through time in a continuous process which produces the fallible substance of 'Imagination' and 'Memory' (15-16): 'For the continuall change of mans body, destroyes in time the parts which in sense were moved' (16). For Hobbes, experience and thought are above all temporal in nature and occur as discrete integers. Individual thoughts cohere only in time, as part of 'the *Consequence*, or TRAYNE of Thoughts', i.e. 'that succession of one Thought to another, which is called […] *Mentall Discourse*' (20), and can only be 'regulated by some desire, and designe', such as 'Passion' (21).

[47] See for example: Adams, as above; the anatomy of 'the great leviathan' in William Vaughan, *The Arraignment of Slander Periury Blasphemy, and other Malicious Sinnes Shewing Sundry Examples of Gods Iudgements against the Ofenders* (1630), p. 76; William Harrison, *Tvvo Treatises: I. The Purchase of Grace […] II. The Soules Delight in Gods Tabernacles* (1639), p. 303; John Brinsley, *Stand Still: Or, A Bridle for the Times. A Discourse Tending to Still the Murmuring, to Settle the Wavering, to Stay the Wandring, to Strengthen the Fainting* (1647), p. 57.

These physical limitations block any natural apprehension of divine attributes: 'No man can have in his mind an Image of infinite magnitude; nor conceive infinite swiftness, infinite time, or infinite force, or infinite power. When we say any thing is infinite, we signifie onely, that we are not able to conceive the ends, and bounds of the thing named; having no Conception of the thing, but of our own inability':

> whatsoever […] we conceive, has been perceived first by sense, either all at once, or by parts; a man can have no thought, representing any thing, not subject to sense. No man therefore can conceive any thing, but he must conceive it in some place; and indued with some determinate magnitude; and which may be divided into parts (23-4)

The infinitely great, however, would thus be perceived as an infinite number of 'parts', through time; man being mortal and his mental images or memories perpetually decaying, the perception could never be complete.

Hobbes carries out his attack on the authority of revelation from several different angles, and problematizes every link in the chain connecting divine fiat to human experience, whether individual or collective. However, in denying that human beings can apprehend the infinite, the epistemological foundation of his entire argument implies that private revelation is simply incompatible with human capacities. Instead, the lack of clarity attending the perception of extremes of magnitude, reflected in the confused, flawed and rapidly degrading store of mental images that constitutes memory, provides a margin of perceptual uncertainty for the ingenious orator or poet to play with. Hobbes's method in *Leviathan*, despite its apparent syllogistic reasonableness, in a sense relies on such limitations in the minds of his own readers, multiplying the arguments, the

examples, and the witty rhetorical flourishes across the full span of the text so as to sap readers' critical faculties.[48]

More strikingly still, in his response to William Davenant's 'Preface to Gondibert' (1650), perceptual limitations provide opportunities for the poet to counterfeit a comprehensive reach. The heroic poem, 'furnished' with the 'matter' of the Poet's mind, and organized according to his superior wit, may simulate supernatural power and insight. Accumulated through experience over a period time, mental riches stockpiled in the memory will ensure that

> the Fancy, when any work of Art is to be performed, findes her materials at hand and prepared for use, and needs no more then a swift motion over them, that what she wants, and is there to be had, may not lie too long unespied. So that when she seemeth to fly from one *Indies* to the other, and from Heaven to Earth, and to penetrate into the hardest matter and obscurest places, into the future and into her self, and all this in a point of time, the voyage is not very great, her self being all she seeks; and her wonderful celerity consisteth not so much in motion as in copious Imagery discreetly ordered & perfectly registred in the memory[49]

This account reverse-engineers Aristotle's description of the experience of the great by recording its creation, a process that involves a shift from temporally extended, lived experience to quantitative mental matter. The latter, in its turn, fuels the fancy's mimic travels in which she seems instantly to traverse huge distances in space and time. Thus, for Hobbes, an Aristotelian account of the infinite leads to the conclusion that the sublime trajectories of the epic muse are mere mnemonic tricks. Finite form is radically distinct from the infinite attributes of the divine.

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[48] Again, my argument here draws on Skinner's and Johnston's insights into Hobbes's use of traditional rhetorical devices.

[49] Thomas Hobbes, 'Answer to Davenant', in *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. by J. E. Spingarn, vol. 2 of 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), pp. 54-66 (pp. 59-60).

(v) *Paradise Lost*

In his refusal to countenance the transmission of infinite temporal or spatial extent into human thought processes (and, therefore, into language), and in his implicit rejection of private revelation, Hobbes was an early and highly articulate critic of 'enthusiasm', 'the claim to personal inspiration by an indwelling spirit, with all its chiliastic and antinomian capacity to turn the social as well as the metaphysical world upside down'.[50] Notwithstanding his praise of *Gondibert* and his own rhetorical agility, the remarks on heroic poetry deconstruct poetic as well as religious enthusiasm; words are unreliable and have no necessary relation even to the experiential 'traynes of imagination' they represent. However, the aesthetics of magnitude as described and exhibited in Aristotle and Job could be put to very different use, and they cohere most strikingly in a work that is utterly antipathetic to Hobbesian materialism: John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. If Marjorie Hope Nicholson's suggestion that 'the most magnificent of all replies to Hobbes [was] *Paradise Lost*' seems to overstate the extent to which Milton has Hobbes in particular in his sights, it is certainly possible to read certain aspects of the poem as echoing or responding to *Leviathan*.[51] Like many contemporaries, formulating a relationship between the individual and collective, the parts and whole of the body politic or Creation is a central concern for Milton as for Hobbes. Like *Leviathan*, Milton's poem

[50]J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: CUP, 1985), p. 28. Recent studies of enthusiasm, whether religious or literary, tend to focus on its political dimension; see Lawrence E. Klein and Anthony J. La Vopa, eds., *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650-1850* (San Marino: Huntington Library Press, 1998), Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style: The Rhetoric of Enthusiasm from the Ranters to Christopher Smart* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), and Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: OUP, 2003). A notable exception is Shaun Irlam, *Elations: the Poetics of Enthusiasm in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1999), which marries political and ideological awareness with close attention to literary form by way of modern critical theory.

[51] Marjorie Hope Nicholson, 'Milton and Hobbes', *Studies in Philology*, 23:4 (1926), 405-33 (p. 411).

also engages with the problematically unverifiable private experience of the divine in ways that reflect on the operations of language and form. However, instead of rejecting private revelation and inspired language, Milton makes them the conduit for that most public of genres, the epic, putting the story of Genesis in the mouth of the invocation's declaredly first-person narrator.

The passage in *Paradise Lost* where 'leviathan' appears freighted with the fullest range of the meanings outlined so far is in Book I, when Satan raises himself up from the fiery liquid floor of Hell:

> Thus Satan talking to his nearest mate
> With head uplift above the wave, and eyes
> That sparkling blazed, his other parts besides
> Prone on the flood, extended long and large
> Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
> As whom the fables name of monstrous size,
> Titanian, or Earth-born, that warred on Jove,
> Briarios or Typhon, whom the den
> By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast
> Leviathan, which God of all his works
> Created hugest that swim the ocean stream:
> Him haply slumbering on the Norway foam
> The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff,
> Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
> With fixèd anchor in his scaly rind
> Moors by his side under the lee, while night
> Invests the sea, and wishèd morn delays:
> So stretched out huge in length the Arch-Fiend lay
> Chained on the burning lake, nor ever thence
> Had risen or heaved his head, but that the will
> And high permission of all-ruling heaven
> Left him at large to his own dark designs,
> That with reiterated crimes he might
> Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
> Evil to others, and enraged might see
> How all his malice served but to bring forth
> Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shown
> On man by him seduced, but on himself
> Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance poured.
> Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool
> His mighty stature; on each hand the flames

> Driv'n backward slope their pointing spires, and, rolled
> In billows, leave i'th' midst a horrid vale.[52]

That Satan should be compared to Leviathan is entirely appropriate, not only because the deceptive whale matches Satan's own duplicity, or because Satan is called Leviathan in Isaiah, but also because the Old Testament sets the immense 'stature and strength' of Leviathan in the worldly scale against his insignificance in relation to divine power, which can if it please 'play with him as with a bird' or break his tightly-knit body into parts.

Milton's simile emphasizes that Satan's overestimation of his own strength is linked to a failure to distinguish between the order of created beings and the absolute order of God, in relation to which every created thing becomes infinitely small and utterly powerless. Furthermore, just as Milton's 'Christian epic' as a whole draws extensively on classical and biblical cultures to reflect contemporary political and religious contexts, this manifestation of 'leviathan' conjures a figure with biblical and classical associations that would have been familiar from recent political and religious controversy, such as that surrounding Hobbes's infamous treatise.[53] In fact, this passage challenges key elements of *Leviathan*'s epistemological arguments; however, in these lines Hobbesian philosophy is not merely rejected but also becomes instrumental in the passage's exploration of 'greatness' as simultaneously a source of sublimity and an object of ironic deflation.

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[52] *PL*, I. 192-224

[53] For Milton's view of epic as both a pagan and a Christian genre see his preface to the second book of *The Reason of Church-government Urg'd against Prelaty* (1642), p. 38.

The context in which the commonplace of the whale mistaken for an island appears suggests a type of 'successive' experience which re-inscribes a Hobbesian epistemology with biblical authority, importing the ideas of *Leviathan* into Christian history.[54] The epic simile, one of the longest of the poem, matches Satan's extent with extensive description and relates size by shifting the narrative from that of Christian history, to pagan mythology, and finally to one that 'seamen tell', in which 'morn delays', inserting a new, dilatory temporal sequence into the poem as though Satan's immensity had overflowed, like Aristotle's creature, into an alternative 'trayne' of events.[55]

In this manoeuvre, the regular, uninflected succession of temporal integers envisaged in *Leviathan* swells and buckles under the pressure of the divine. As a key signifier of the epic genre, the appearance of an extended simile underscores the sublime grandeur of the figure of Satan, but the use to which it is put challenges the Hobbesian 'misconceptions' of value and scale and so undermines the fallen angel's reasoning. In the lines of moral analysis (209-220) that follow these embedded narratives, the distinction between the two scales of greatness is a source of irony, which is pointed up

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[54] Kester Svendsen notes that 'Milton seemed particularly interested' in the whale, drawing his descriptions from various late medieval encyclopaedias. Kester Svendsen, 'Milton and the Encyclopedias of Science', *Studies in Philology*, 39:2 (1942), 303-27. For further readings of the simile see Fowler's notes in the Longman edition. Various publications which kept Hobbes's dangerous leviathan in print include Alexander Ross, *Leviathan Drawn out with a Hook* (1653), John Whitehall, *The Leviathan Found Out* (1679) and John Dowell *The Leviathan Heretical* (1683); all three appropriate the punning ambiguity of Hobbes' title into their own, drawing on contemporary practices of biblical quotation and exegesis in a way that replicates the disingenuous wordplay they contest while at the same time perplexing the distinctions between the vast creature, Satan, the text and its author.

[55] Robert Shaw argues that the rhythm of line 202, 'Created hugest that swim the ocean stream', is 'deliberate[ly] awkward' as the 'accents are swept out of position in much the same way that the enormous bulk of the whale displaces tons of seawater'. If this is the case, then just as the description of Satan's bulk 'overflows' into an alternative temporal framework, so the regular patterning of the iambic line is displaced into an alternative rhythmic dimension as the number of stresses per foot is doubled then diminished: time is happening in a different place. Robert B. Shaw, *Blank Verse: A Guide To is History and Use* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 2007), p. 55.

by an array of puns and paradoxes on the notion and vocabulary of size: horizontally 'extended', Satan can only lift his head as high as the 'high permission' of heaven will allow; 'long and large', he has also been left 'at large' but yet is 'chained' upon the lake. Alongside this wordplay, a kind of parodic distortion of Hobbes's axiomatic and additive logic subverts arithmetic reasoning.[56] Since 'reiterated crimes' heap 'damnation' upon Satan's head, a relation of quantitative proportionality seems to be implied between crime and retribution, as Hobbes had suggested in his comments on punishment.[57] However, Satan's finite and obsessively singular passion, malice, mysteriously brings forth a triplet of 'infinite goodness, grace and mercy' while it multiplies, or more accurately, 'trebles', his 'confusion, wrath and vengeance'. By the time we return to the narrative of action in line 221, worldly, materialist, and cumulative reasoning and measurement have been completely dismantled in the face of an infinite and mysterious providence. Thus when Satan rears his 'mighty stature' in line 222, recalling the 'greater stature' of Hobbes's 'Artificiall Man', we recognize the epithet as radically ironized.

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In *Regaining Paradise*, Dustin Griffin explains that '[a]s a formidable presence in recent English history and in English culture, Milton no less than Newton *demanded* the muse. By 1700 he had become part of the English writer's tradition, part of the very literary air

[56] On Hobbes's interest in 'the axiomatic method of reasoning commonly associated with geometry' and his concern with the use and misuse of language, see Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Cultural Transformation*, pp. 22, 56.
[57] See for e.g. the measurement of the harm done by punishment against the benefit incurred by the crime, *Leviathan*, p. 215.

he breathed, and the language in which he had to write'. In addition, 'Milton's mastery of the highest literary forms, and his comprehensive and compelling synthesis of disparate traditions' including 'Christian and classical' gave him a unique degree of 'authority' over the poets of the eighteenth century.[58] Roger Lund similarly emphasizes Hobbes's impact on writers of the next century: he is 'not merely […] the last in a line of Renaissance Humanists, but […] the first in a line of Restoration and Augustan wits who imitated Hobbes's philosophic drollery even as they rejected his philosophical arguments.'[59] Equally important was Hobbes's contribution to the empiricist theories which, via Locke and others, shaped eighteenth-century culture in so many ways. A further legacy these two authors leave to later critics and poets consists in their self-reflexive explorations of what Kroll terms the 'method' of linguistic discourse, and which I will consider in terms of form. Another is their understandings of greatness and of its transmission or representation via extensive poetry. Chapters 1 and 2 set out to describe how these inheritances were taken up by Dennis, Addison and Pope.

[58] Dustin Griffin, *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: CUP, 1986), pp. 2-3.
[59] Lund, 'The Bite of Leviathan', p. 825.

CHAPTER 1
'HIS LINE STRETCHED OUT SO FAR': GREATNESS IN DENNIS AND ADDISON

Introduction

John Dennis and Joseph Addison are among the early eighteenth-century theorists of poetry whose ideas most influenced their contemporaries, and it is their analyses of poetic greatness and long poems that set the agenda for later critics and poets. Of the two, the impact of the seventeenth-century varieties of greatness described above can most clearly be traced in the writings of Dennis, a poet, playwright and critic who started his career in the early 1690s and, despite becoming deeply unfashionable in the 1710s, remained active in the London republic of letters until within a few years of his death in 1734. Jeffrey Barnouw has outlined Dennis's debt to seventeenth-century thought: '[d]rawing on achievements in psychology and poetry from the preceding century, in the writings of Hobbes and Milton, Dennis essentially renewed a conception which he found in the classical locus of the sublime [,] "Longinus"'.[60] While Barnouw concentrates on Dennis's account of passion as the force which motivates men's thoughts and actions, I wish to focus more particularly on the impact that his adoption of a Hobbesian, or at any rate empiricist, model of the successive 'Trayne' of 'Mentall Discourse' has on the type of poetic theory he develops. Similarly, although Barnouw, like the majority of Dennis's modern readers, draws attention to the central role played by *Paradise Lost* in his treatises, his response to representations of greatness in the poem has not yet been

[60] Jeffrey Barnouw, 'The Morality of the Sublime: To John Dennis', *Comparative Literature*, 35:1 (1983), 21-42 (p. 22).

considered but is, I would suggest, central to understanding his theory of poetic enthusiasm.

In the first half of the chapter, I draw attention to this inheritance and argue that Dennis's theory of the sublime not only privileges greatness, but also understands the concept in the kinds of complex ways that, as we have seen, are implicit in both classical and Christian literary traditions and had been elaborated by seventeenth-century writers. While he subscribes to the neoclassical ideal of the harmonious and ordered poem, greatness in poetry doesn't just map onto its spatially figured 'structure'. Perhaps more importantly for Dennis, it also registers linearly, in the temporal 'succession' of the verse, a bias which develops out of his interpretation of the two 'leviathans' we have just discussed and would come to exert a significant influence on the three long poems discussed in Part II.

However, Thomson, Akenside and Young experience Dennis's ideas through the filter of later developments in British poetic and critical theory, to which the contributions of Addison are paramount. In his criticism, Addison addresses many similar issues – crucially, he adopts many of Dennis's insights into 'the great' – yet develops the matrix of ideas he acquires in a rather different direction. His Saturday series of *Spectator* papers on *Paradise Lost*[61] borrows material not only from Dennis but from other early readers of Milton, and throughout the periodical he takes up the concerns of the learned literary and philosophical debates of the seventeenth-century 'republic of letters' whilst re-imagining them for the 'republics' of the coffeehouse and

[61] Addison's critical account of *Paradise Lost* appeared as a series of eighteen weekly papers between January 5th and May 3rd, 1712. *The Spectator*, no. 267, vol. ii, p. 520 to no. 369, vol. iii, p. 390.

tea-table in the early eighteenth century.[62] This is consonant with the periodical as a whole, where many ideas which figure in Dennis's critical writings, such as the sublimity of the Old Testament or the appropriateness of using blank verse in tragedy, are repeated or contested by Mr. Spectator in a dramatically different register.[63] Taken together, the essays thus suggest a range of responses to topics which had appeared in Dennis's treatises and which – due in part to the huge impact of *The Spectator* – would become central to the ways in which authors and readers of the period imagined or interpreted the long poem and the relationship between parts and whole in extensive literature.[64] The second half of the chapter, therefore, turns to key numbers of *The Spectator* in order to explore how the literal temporal and physical extension of greatness fares in the setting of the periodical essay, a genre which I suggest provides the key mechanisms by which Addison makes safe the potentially radical energies of *Paradise Lost* and the enthusiasms and deceptions associated with poetic greatness.[65]

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[62] The extent to which *The Spectator* essays genuinely represent a democratization of learning has been a subject of great debate. Habermas's discussion of *The Spectator*'s contribution to the formation of a sociable 'public sphere' in the early eighteenth century has since been commented, challenged and revised – see for instance Lawrence E. Klein, 'Sociability, Solitude, and Enthusiasm', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 60:1-2 (1998), 153-77, Brian Cowan, 'Mr Spectator and the Coffeehouse Public Sphere', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37:3 (2004), 345-66 and Anthony Pollock, 'Neutering Addison and Steele: Aesthetic Failure and the Spectatorial Public Sphere', *ELH*, 74:3 (2007), 707-34.

[63] For example, Addison rejects Dennis's theory of tragedy by mocking 'poetic justice' as 'a ridiculous Doctrine in modern Criticism', but, as Niles Hooker has shown, he follows Dennis's arguments quite closely on other points. See *The Spectator*, no. 39, i, 164 and no. 160, ii, 127. On the importance, or lack of importance, of Dennis's influence on Addison's *Paradise Lost* essays see their respective editors: Dennis, *Critical Works*, vol. i, pp. 513-14; *The Spectator*, ii, p. 538.

[64] See Lawrence E Klein, 'Addison's Afterlives', *JECS*, 35:1 (2012), 101-18.

[65] On Restoration perceptions of *Paradise Lost* as dangerously enthusiastic see Sharon Achinstein, 'Milton's Spectre in the Restoration: Marvell, Dryden, and Literary Enthusiasm', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 59:1 (1996), 1-29; for the later 'rehabilitation' of the poem in early Whig discourse see Nicholas Von Maltzahn, 'The Whig Milton, 1667-1700', in *Milton and Republicanism*, ed. by David Armitage, Armand Himy, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), pp. 229-53.

(i) Dennis and the greatness of poetic enthusiasm

What the two authors most clearly share, however, is an investment in the Whig cultural discourses that emerged in the years following the Glorious Revolution. John Morillo describes Dennis as allied to the Whig establishment of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, sharing its interest in 'cultivating toleration and latitudinarianism' as a means of neutralizing the political and religious 'fanaticism' of the mid-century and thereby stabilizing its own authority.[66] In his 1702 preface to *The Monument*, for instance, Dennis writes of himself as a politically neutral patriot in terms typical of Country Whig discourse, stressing the higher goods of 'Publick' and 'Country'.[67] However, in the literary-critical arena his discourse is less neutral. While memories of the excesses of the previous century motivate an investment in discourses of politeness and a determined avoidance (or mockery) of enthusiastic rhetoric in authors such as Pope or even, as we will see, Addison, Dennis apparently felt that forthright mediation was the solution to the cultural strife of earlier generations.[68]

His critical theory thus actively sets out to force an agreement between the extremes of Ancients and Moderns, the 'New Science' and the methods of the 'Scole-men', Passion and Reason. In *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry*

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[66] John Morillo, *Uneasy Feelings: Literature, the Passions, and Class from Neoclassicism to Romanticism* (New York: AMS, 2001), p. 19.
[67] Dennis, 'The Monument', in *Critical Works*, vol. i, pp. 296-298 (p. 296).
[68] For accounts of eighteenth-century politeness focused respectively on Whig and Scriblerian culture see Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994) and Thomas Woodman, *Politeness and Poetry in the Age of Pope* (Rutherford [N.J.]: Fairleigh Dickinson UP; London: Associated University Presses, 1989). For an interesting account of eighteenth-century cultural responses to the political and ecclesiastical upheavals of the seventeenth century see Ronald Paulson, *Breaking and Remaking: Aesthetic Practice in England, 1700-1820* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1989).

(1701) Dennis styles himself 'an agreeable Mediator of Peace', aiming 'to set the Moderns upon an equal Foot, with even admir'd Antiquity', 'Reconciling the common Friends to Poetry' and 'calming the Fury of the contending Parties' by means of an 'impartial Enquiry into the Merits of the Cause' in which he will 'extort important Concessions from both' whilst '[engaging] both Parties by Turns, by supporting their just Pretensions.'[69] The lexis of vigorous political diplomacy highlights the way in which the treatise as a whole 'extorts' a 'treaty' between the two 'parties' by means of wide-ranging reference and quotation, forcing Horace and Dryden, Petronius and Molière, Shakespeare and Sophocles into close proximity within his text, and rallying them all to 'the common Cause' of poetic excellence (ibid.).

The numerous and extensive quotations included in the text also allow Dennis to integrate the philosophical frameworks of classical paganism and Christianity, so that the pervasive influence of Aristotle, for whom Dennis evinced 'an admiration […] that bordered on idolatry', is matched by extensive reference to the Old and New Testaments.[70] However, for David Morris, the opposition Dennis was most concerned to reconcile was rather that of two critical theories inherited from Restoration writers of earlier decades: 'the Hobbesian theory of Fancy and Judgement and the Miltonic doctrine of inspiration.'[71] While, as Niles Hooker warns, much of what seems 'Hobbesian' about Dennis's poetics may just as well have been acquired from other sources, Morris's

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[69] Dennis, 'The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry', in *Critical Works*, i, pp. 197-278 (pp. 200, 209).
[70] Niles Hooker, 'Introduction' in *Critical Works*, vol. ii, pp. vii-cxliii (p. xviii). More recently, Donnelly notes Dennis's 'explicit attention to Aristotelian rules' (Phillip J. Donnelly, 'Enthusiastic Poetry and Rationalized Christianity: the Poetic Theory of John Dennis', *Christianity and Literature,* 54:2 (2005), 235-64, p. 239). See for example the praise of Aristotle, i, p. 329. Biblical references in 'Advancement and Reformation' include i, p. 260 (Colossians; Corinthians I); p. 262 (Corinthians I); p. 268 (Psalms).
[71] David B. Morris, *The Religious Sublime; Christian Poetry and Critical Tradition in 18th-century England* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1972), p. 48; see also pp. 49-50.

reading seems broadly correct, to the extent that Dennis does indeed marry empiricist epistemology with the venerable idea of poetry as divine afflatus. In doing so, however, he seems to pick up on and develop Milton's own engagement with 'leviathan' empiricist philosophy as seen in the epic simile of *Paradise Lost*, Book I.[72] Dennis's account of 'enthusiasm' (which Morris conflates with his own term, 'the religious sublime') is thus concerned with how the great manifests itself in poetry, and with how poetry is experienced in time, as rhetorical 'motion'. Therefore, although some emphasis is placed on judgment and reason in the composition and reading of poetry, in both *Advancement and Reformation* and in his other major work of poetic theory, *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (1704), the descriptions of 'enthusiastic passion' effectively read like a Hobbesian explanation of a phenomenon Hobbes wished to discredit.

Simply put, a transfer of focus similar to that in Aristotle between the excessively large creature and the temporally extensive perception and experience of it allows Dennis to incorporate elements of Hobbes's psychology and Milton's poetics within a single theory of poetical enthusiasm in which the greatness of the sublime object becomes instead the 'successive' sublime, shifting the figuratively great into a temporally extended progression. An early passage in *Advancement and Reformation* exemplifies this, as Dennis writes of 'the *Oedipus* of *Sophocles*',

> how instrumental the Poetical Art is in leading him [i.e. the reader] from Surprize to Surprize, from Compassion to Terror, and from Terror to Compassion again, without giving him so much as a Time to breathe, and he will […] easily discover, how the Religion is every where intermix'd with the Play, shews all the Surprizes, even when he least expects this, as so many immediate successive Effects, of a particular dreadful Providence, which make them come, like so many Thunder-claps from a serene Heaven, to confound and astonish him. (i, 201)

[72] See Hooker, 'Introduction', p. xcii.

'Successive Effects' recalls Hobbes's 'successive Trayne' or 'successive Consequence of Imagination', but where Hobbes uses his account of perception and thought as the basis for an argument which ridicules the transports of individual revelation, Dennis draws very different conclusions. In this excerpt, the great power or force of the divinely inspired poetic imagination operates in time, and although this reflects the fact that Dennis is referring to a dramatic work, it also prefigures the treatise's more generalized arguments about a whole range of genres. The sublime violence of religious poetry deals not just a single 'momentary' blow or 'surprize' to the reader, but a series in which the effect of an individual surprise is heightened by its difference from those preceding and following it, obliterating the mortal rhythm of human breath and imposing a chiastic pattern of paradisal 'play', from 'Compassion to Terror, and from Terror to Compassion again'. Play, to use two of Samuel Johnson's definitions, here seems to mean not only the work performed but also '[i]rregular and wanton motion' and '[a] state of agitation or ventilation', aptly aligning motion with cathartic mental or affective disturbance.[73]

This model is not merely a Hobbesian adaptation of Aristotle, however. It also correlates the two different ways of thinking about the sublime articulated in *Peri Hypsous*. Near the start of it, Longinus writes that

> great and lofty Thoughts do not so truly perswade, as charm and throw us into a Rapture. They form in us a kind of Admiration made up of Extasy and Surprize […] Tho' Invention sparkles, tho' order and justness of Thought display themselves […] through the whole train of [a Discourse], yet do they scarce strike on the Mind. But a *sublime*

[73] 'PLAY. *n. s.*', definitions 9 and 10, in Samuel Johnson, *Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language*, 9th, corrected and revised edn, 2 vols (London: J. Johnson et al., 1806), vol. ii.

> flight, tho' 'tis only once darted, if it is well plac'd, like a Tempest, carries all before it, and shews all the strength of an Orator combin'd into one stroke.[74]

Here the 'surprize' of the 'great and lofty' is unitary and instantaneous, like the atemporal version found in key texts of the Romantic period. However, further on Longinus comes to compare the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. The former, he argues, is a product of old age; in it Homer 'flags' and cannot keep up his strength for the full extent, as he had in the *Iliad*:

> He strikes no longer on the same Key: there is nothing of that *Sublime* which runs through the *Iliads* with an even pace, without either rub or stop. There is no train of Passions rang'd close to one another [75]

The greatest poetry, therefore, consists of a 'train of circumstances', which the poet 'bind[s] ingeniously together'.[76]

In the course of *Advancement and Reformation* Dennis goes on to explain the logic behind his account of successive surprises, which is '[t]hat Passion is the chief Thing in Poetry' (215) and that poets 'arrive at the Height of their Art, when they describe a great deal of Action, with a great deal of Passion' (216). Not only does his mechanism represent the poem as a succession of effects in time, it is also inherently productive of articulated poetic extension. The greater the action represented, the greater the amount of passion the poet will communicate, and the more numerous the 'effects', providing more 'affective motion' in the reader. Thus, although Dennis (like Longinus)

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[74] *An Essay upon Sublime, translated from the Greek of Dionysius Longinus Cassius; compar'd with the French of le Sieur Despreux Boileau* (1698), p. 3. Where this version of Longinus uses Boileau's 'sublime', an earlier translation gives the title as 'Of Height', making the figurative physical dimension more obvious (*Peri Hypsous,or Dionysius Longinus of the Height of Eloquence*, tr. J. H[?all] (Francis Eaglesfield, 1652), in *EEBO*). Nonetheless, 'great', 'height' and various related terms are used throughout the 1698 translation.

[75] *An Essay upon Sublime* (1698), pp. 22-3.

[76] Ibid., p. 25.

never directly addresses the literal magnitude of poetry, verbal and narrative multiplicity and variety are its implicit aims and extension the inevitable attribute.

The underlying bias in favour of length may also relate to the kind of poems Dennis chooses to consider, which are primarily examples of what he terms 'the Greater Poetry'. In *The Grounds of Criticism* he specifies that this consists of 'Heroick' or 'Epick' poetry, tragedy, and 'the Greater Ode' (331). The latter treatise was to have considered all three of the 'greater' kinds but since Dennis never carried out his plan, the genre given the most detailed consideration is the epic (ibid.), elaborating many of the ideas introduced in an earlier work, *Remarks on Prince Arthur* (1696).[77] Thus, the sublime or enthusiastic poems from which he quotes extensively and upon which he bases his arguments in the two major treatises are mainly long poems: in addition to *Paradise Lost* and Virgil (the *Georgics* as well as the *Aeneid*, although he judges the latter more 'religious'), he examines passages from Homer, Ovid, Lucretius and Tasso. This focus means that his account of the sublime becomes *de facto* a theory of the sublime in long poems, and their dimensions have an impact on the type of theory he develops.

However, like Longinus, Dennis also seems sensitive to more local renderings of greatness. In *Advancement and Reformation* he refers to or quotes several 'sublime' accounts of Creation, including those by Lucretius and Ovid, a focus that is probably influenced by the passage in *Peri Hypsous* where Longinus cites the divine fiat as an instance of the sublime.[78] Jonathan Lamb suggests that for early-eighteenth-century theorizers of the sublime, 'let there be light' represents a divinely dimensionless,

[77] Dennis, 'Remarks on a Book Entituled, Prince Arthur' in *Critical Works*, i, pp. 46-144.
[78] *An Essay upon Sublime* (1698), p. 21.

immediate speech act which fuses word and deed, rhetoric and power, allowing divine force to be usurped by the prophet, poet or critic who quotes it.[79] However, after '*Let there be Light*', Longinus immediately quotes a second command: '*Let there be an Earth, and there was an Earth*', pointing to the series of speech-acts that together produce the complete Creation.[80] The sublime, in this context, is no longer disembodied and instantaneous but relates to the literal quantity and dimensions of what God creates, the visible and temporally extended index of His power that for physico-theological thinkers provided such compelling arguments for His existence. This full, six-day process seems to have held more appeal for Dennis, and the link with philosophy is made clear in *Grounds of Criticism*, which likewise refers to multiple poetic versions of the Creation narrative, and cites the 'Immensity of the Universe' as one of the 'Ideas that are most proper to produce Enthusiasm or Admiration' (348). Therefore, Dennis concludes, 'Natural Philosophy is absolutely necessary to a Poet, not only that he may adorn his Poem with the useful Knowledge it affords, but because the more he knows the immense Phænomena of the Universe, the more he will be sure to admire them.' (350)

In both treatises, Dennis singles out passages from *Paradise Lost* where astronomical sublimities of scale are very much in evidence. In *Advancement and Reformation* he 'produce[s] some Instances of the Pre-eminence of the Christian over the Pagan Poets', the second of which is 'from Milton, who in the Seventh Book of the *Paradise Lost* has handled the Subject of the Creation better than either *Ovid*, or *Virgil* himself has done' (271), especially in 'his Description of *Chaos*, and the Creation of the

[79] Lamb, Jonathan, 'The Institution of Criticism in the Eighteenth Century', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Volume 4: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. by H.B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson, vol. 4 of 9 (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), pp. 394-416 (pp. 395-99).
[80] *An Essay upon Sublime* (1698)

World from *Chaos*' (272). In *Grounds of Criticism*, he makes a similar point and cites the following lines from Book VIII of *Paradise Lost*:

> And for the Heavens wide Circuit, let it speak
> The Maker's high Magnificence, who built
> So spacious, and his Line stretch'd out so far,
> That Man may know he dwells not in his own;
> An Edifice too large for him to fill,
> Lodg'd in a small Partition, and the rest
> Ordain'd for Uses to his Lord best known.[81]

This replicates a technique used in the 'leviathan' simile whereby the description of physically large spaces and objects is given formal expression, and is exemplary of Milton's trademark 'sense variously drawn out from one verse into another'.[82] In the first two lines, the visual pause of the line break is used to 'extend' and 'let speak' the time of reading to match the extent of space, before the poet's 'line' is mimetically 'stretch'd out' in ten monosyllables so that it becomes an 'edifice too large', of which 'Man' fills only a fraction.[83]

The manner in which Dennis frames the references suggests that he recognizes what one might call the mimetic effects of Milton's prosody.[84] In both cases he sets the

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[81] *PL*, VIII. 100-106, quoted Dennis, *Critical Works*, i, 349.
[82] 'The Verse', in *PL*, p. 55.
[83] He also cites Adam's speech in the same book 'concerning the Magnitude and the Motions of the Heavens and Earth', which 'derive a lofty Spirit from their Subject' (i, 350):

> When I behold this goodly Frame, this World,
> Of Heaven and Earth consisting, and compute
> Their Magnitudes, this Earth a Spot, a Grain,
> An Atom with the Firmament compar'd
> And all her numbred Stars, that seem to roll
> Spaces incomprehensible (for such
> Their Distance argues, and their swift Return
> Diurnal) (*PL*, VIII. 15-22, quoted Dennis, *Critical Works*, i, 350)

[84] See John Hollander, "Sense Variously Drawn Out': Some Observations on English Enjambment', in *Literary Theory and Structure: Essays in Honor of William K. Wimsatt*, ed. by Frank Brady, John Palmer, and Martin Price (New Haven and London: Yale U.P, 1973), pp. 201-25 (p. 220).

quotations of *Paradise Lost* alongside his own rendering of the *Te Deum* (the so-called 'Hymn of St. Ambrose') as a Pindaric ode; even a brief reading of the latter confirms not only how carefully Dennis had read *Paradise Lost*, but the centrality of rhetorical and prosodic representations of magnitude – the poetic equivalent of providence's surprising play – to his understanding of the 'greater poetry'.[85] In *Advancement and Reformation* he reproduces the full poem. In the opening strophe, the literal, linear expansion of the original hymn[86] is linked to the infinite immensity of the theme, as the poet announces a flight to 'immortal heights':[87]

> A Long adieu to mortal lays,
> Our voice t'immortal heights we raise
> And sing the great Creators praise.
> Thy praise, O God, thy boundless praise,
> In more than Human sounds we sing,
> O for an Angels Tow'ring wing!
> O! Rather for thy Spirit to sustain
> Each matchless strain![88]

Such aspirations are of course part of the rhetorical repertoire of the 'Greater Ode' which Dennis planned to address in *Grounds of Criticism*. Translated into a Christian context, however, poetic ambition is inevitably doomed to exhaustion by the 'boundless' scale against which its mortal desire is matched. Likewise, the paraphrase is reminiscent of

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[85] David Morris stresses the importance of remembering that 'many eighteenth-century critics were also practicing poets' (*The Religious Sublime*, p. 11), but does not actually consider any of Dennis's poems; nor, to my knowledge, do his other modern critics. Hooker does not include the poem in his text of 'Advancement and Reformation', but his explanatory notes specify that it was reprinted in Dennis's *A Collection of Divine Hymns and Poems upon Several Occasions* (1709) and in his *Select Works* (1718).

[86] From 28 lines to 201.

[87] The invocation of *Paradise Lost* is in fact singled out for praise in 'The Grounds of Criticism', i, p. 342. However, similarly Miltonic invocations are also regularly found in early eighteenth-century biblical poetry; see for instance Blackmore's *A Paraphrase on the Book of Job* (1700) and *Creation: A Philosophical Poem. In Seven Books* (1712).

[88] 'Te Deum, & c. We praise thee O God.', in John Dennis, *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701) in *ECCO* [accessed Feb. 2011], pp. 192-200, verse I, ll. 1-8.

seventeenth-century religious lyric in general, but the descriptions of a vast Miltonic heaven and the strategic use of run-on lines to evoke greatness recall Dennis's favourite poem, *Paradise Lost*, and link the paraphrase not only to Milton's invocation in Book I but also to the angels' hymn of praise at the end of Book VII, 'Great are thy works, Jehovah, infinite/ Thy power; what thought can measure thee or tongue/ Relate thee'.[89] 'Long adieu' plays on the double temporal and spatial referent of the apotheosis, so that the poem's length represents the greatness of its subject.[90] The time taken to cover the distance of the 'immortal heights' to which the poet is raising his voice results in a temporally extended departure from human poetry in pursuit of divine spirit, which is also, simultaneously, a hymn to divine immensity, linearly extensive verse which tracks the span of the universe. In a process of literal inspiration, God's boundlessness[91] becomes 'boundless praise'. Just as Milton so often does in *Paradise Lost*, Dennis uses enjambment to emphasize temporal extension, when the poet prays for 'thy Spirit to sustain/ Each matchless strain', and syllables and stresses are redistributed so that the first line of the last couplet is 'sustained' for an extra foot.

In *Grounds of Criticism* he reproduces part of the final epode of his *Te Deum*. In it, he recounts how 'our weary'd Eyes want farther Strength/ To pierce the Void's immeasurable Length' in a strikingly long sentence of eight heroic couplets which again seems to adapt Milton's techniques of formal mimesis in order to replicate the experience of spatial immensity, quite literally 'stretching' the poetic reproduction and so 'wearying' the reader's 'Eyes' :

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[89] *PL*, VII, ll. 603-5.
[90] *PL*, VII. 602-632.
[91] In line 17 God is 'infinite eternal King' and line 22 refers to his 'boundless sway'.

> Where'er at utmost Stretch we cast our Eyes,
> Thro the vast frightful Spaces of the Skies,
> Ev'n there we find thy Glory, there we gaze
> On thy bright Majesty's unbounded Blaze:
> Ten thousand Suns, prodigious Globes of Light,
> At once in broad Dimensions strike our Sight;
> Millions behind, in the remoter Skies,
> Appear but Spangles to our weary'd Eyes:
> And when our weary'd Eyes want farther Strength
> To pierce the Void's immeasurable Length,
> Our vigorous tow'ring Thoughts still further fly,
> And still remoter flaming Worlds descry:
> But even an Angel's comprehensive Thought,
> Cannot extend so far as thou hast wrought;
> Our vast Conceptions are by swelling, brought,
> Swallow'd and lost in Infinite, to nought. (349)

Thus, the 'broad Dimensions', 'immeasurable Length' and innumerable parts of the sublimely vast object (the universe) are represented in an extensive description which replicate the experience (in time) of it. These lines come from the very end of the poem; as such, the 'vast Conceptions', the ideas that fill his mind and his lines, have been literally 'brought' to an end, to 'nought'.

(iii) Poetic transport: from the irregular to the regular

The spatial and temporal nature of Dennis's sublime also appears more generally in his critical treatises as an omnipresent metaphor of emotional 'transport': sublime passion is a force and poetry records the 'terrible Ideas' that have 'mov'd' the Poet, causing the reader to be 'transported beyond himself' (231). The intensiveness with which the various forms and synonyms of 'to move' are used throughout *Advancement and Reformation* and *Grounds of Criticism* make it the primary metaphor of emotional

response, re-invigorating the Renaissance conceit of poetic or rhetorical motion.[92] In a passage describing Virgil's account of Laocoon's death, Dennis further emphasizes that poetry is and causes movement by his suggestion that the affective transport poetry produces is proportional to the physical action it describes. In Part I Chapter VII, 'The Causes of Poetical Enthusiasm, shewn by Examples', Dennis asks the reader to 'consider' the 'very Masterly [Image], out of the Second Book of *Virgil*' which 'gave Occasion for that incomparable Statue of *Laocoon*, which I saw at *Rome*, in the Gardens of *Belvidere*, and which is so astonishing, that it does not appear to be the Work of Art, but the miserable Creature himself, like *Niobe*, benumm'd and petrify'd with Grief and Horror' (220).

The stasis of the 'benumm'd' and 'petrify'd' Belvedere Laocoon stands in vivid contrast to the poetic original, where the poet 'sets his Image in Motion':

> here we find a deal of Enthusiasm; which is nothing but the Elevation, and Vehemence, and Fury proceeding from the Great, and Terrible, and Horrible Ideas. For the Poet setting his Image in so much Motion, and expressing it with so much Action, his inflam'd Imagination set it before his very Eyes, so that he participated of the Danger which he describ'd, was shaken by the Terror, and shiver'd with the Horror. And what is it but the Expression of the Passions he felt, that moves the Reader in such an extraordinary Manner. (222)

Dennis's awareness of the 'Sister Arts' tradition of comparing painting and poetry is attested by a reference to it in *A Large Account of the Present Taste in Poetry* (1702),[93] and although he does not comment further on the difference between the 'petrify'd' Image of the statue and the energy he detects in the verse, poetic enthusiasm is clearly

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[92] See Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes*, pp. 123-26, for this figure's roots in classical rhetoric and its development in the Early Modern period.

[93] 'A Large Account of the Present Taste in Poetry, and the Causes of the Degeneracy of it' in *Critical Works*, vol. i, pp. 279-295 (p. 285).

associated with literal 'Motion' the imagined action generates in the author, causing him to 'shake' and 'shiver', and which, transmitted via the text, 'moves the Reader' in an 'Extraordinary' manner.[94] The 'Sublime' in poetry is thus defined as 'an invincible Force, *transporting* the Soul from its ordinary Situation, and a *Transport*' (223, my emphases). In *Grounds of Criticism* he makes explicit the precept suggested in the Laocoon passage and returns us to the 'Surprizes' of the passage cited in the first part of this chapter, stating that 'an absent Object can never be set before the Eye in a true Light, unless it be shewn in violent Action or Motion, because unless it is shewn so, the Soul has leisure to reflect upon the Deception. But violent Motion can never be conceiv'd without a violent Agitation of the Spirit, and that sudden Agitation surprizes the Soul, and gives it less time to reflect' (362).

The reference to the deception of poetry recalls the 'confounding' dimension of poetical 'play' in *Advancement and Reformation*, which in Samuel Johnson's definition, 'wanton and irregular motion', carries a suggestion of satanic deviousness. This in turn brings us back to the 'feigned' rapidity of Hobbes's 'Fancy', and links enthusiasm's play with that of wit, a congruence that Abigail Williams highlights in her discussion of 'politics and literary enthusiasm in the early eighteenth century'. As she points out, while 'for many Anglican critics, literary enthusiasm took the form of stylistic obscurity and useless ornament', 'it was also associated with wit, a more attractive form of verbal ornament'.[95] Dennis suggests as much when, in Chapter IX of *Advancement and*

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[94] On the 'transport' of figurative language, see Lamb, 'The Sublime', pp. 396-7. On the location of the sublime – i.e. its exteriority or interiority – in various formulations see Andrew Ashfield and Peter De Bolla, eds., *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), pp. 10-11.

[95] Abigail Williams, '"The Poetry of the Un-enlightened": Politics and Literary Enthusiasm in the Early Eighteenth Century', *History of European Ideas*, 31:2 (2005), 299-311 (p. 308).

Reformation, he turns to consider comedy, finding that 'the Ancients are so far from excelling the Moderns […], that the Advantage is clearly on our side' (224). He ascribes this advantage to the greater quantity of '*Ridiculum*' in modern comedy, which requires 'Variety of it both in the Incidents, and in the Characters', which in turn produces the 'Surprizes', without which 'the *Ridiculum* cannot subsist.' (224). Thus '*Ridiculum*', much like enthusiasm in the 'Greater Poetry', is found in a multiplicity of surprises.

The need to enchain surprises to prevent the reader from reflecting on poetry's deceptions finds a correlative in the spatial or structural aspect of poetry, since poetic descriptions of the Creation, whether as event or as artefact, allow a beguiling superposition of divine creation (the theme) and human creation (the poem). Dennis's argument in this respect reworks theories familiar from neoclassical criticism in the service of 'poetical enthusiasm' in ways that would prove vital to later developments in poetic theory and practice. Following a long-standing tradition, he associates Nature with Regularity or Harmony, both qualities which have formal overtones: 'Nature, taken in a stricter Sense, is nothing but that Rule and Order, and Harmony, which we find in the visible Creation.' Thus, 'Poetry, which is an Imitation of Nature, must do the same Thing. It can neither have Greatness or Real Beauty, if it swerves from the Laws which Reason severely prescribes it'.[96]

Regularity, harmony, and reason are terms that seem to jar with the accounts of 'passion' as the basis for poetry which are introduced in *Advancement and Reformation* and given still more emphatic expression in *Grounds of Criticism*. However, in Dennis's argument the contrast reflects the relation between general and particular providence. In

[96] Dennis, *Critical Works*, i, p. 202. For Dennis' response to the neoclassical literary theory of the French critic Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux see Ann T Delhanty, 'Mapping the Aesthetic Mind: John Dennis and Nicolas Boileau', *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 68:2 (2007), 233-54.

a conventional account of the disjunction between the perspectives of the omnipotent and omniscient deity and flawed, postlapsarian Man, the 'beauteous All' in the 'Harmony of Universal Nature' is set against the 'appearing Irregularities' in 'some of the numberless Parts' within it.[97] Equally,

> if we may compare great Things with small, in the Creation of the accomplish'd Poem, some Things may at first Sight be seemingly against Reason, which yet, at the Bottom, are perfectly regular, because they are indispensably necessary to the admirable Conduct of a great and a just Design.[98] (ibid.)

'If we may compare' is Dennis's intervention as enthusiastic critic, boldly linking the human with the divine, so that the poet is implicitly made responsible for resolving not only his own poem's 'appearing Irregularities' (202) but those of the Creation into a general, harmonious providential order. Whereas God alone can truly perceive the 'Harmony of Universal Nature' (ibid.), poems are written by humans and as anyone with sufficient 'Capacity' and 'Discernment' (203) will recognize the true poetic decorum behind the 'appearing' excesses of great poetry. Thus, by a rhetorical equation of God's creation with that of the poet, Dennis transfers the burden of justifying 'the Oppressions of the Good and the Flourishing of the Bad' (ibid.) to the realm of poetry.

If the deceptive figure of analogy allows the poet's art to regularize the irregular appearances of fallen Creation, a similar process occurs in the 'successive' transfer of divine afflatus from God to poet to reader permitted by prosodic mimesis and by the fanciful figure of 'transport'. When the poem in question deals with religious subjects and is composed with sufficient skill, the poet's divinely prompted 'passion' transfers

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[97] Ibid., i, p. 202. See also Dryden's translation of a passage from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, which Dennis quotes in the same treatise: 'Thus, when God, whatever God was he,/ Had form'd the Whole, and made the Parts agree,/ That no unequal Portions might be found,/ He moulded Earth into a spacious Round' (274). In Dennis's view this measured and concise summary is less noble and sublime than Milton's account.
[98] Ibid., 202.

through to the text, thence to the reader, and regularizes his vision so that 'he who is entertain'd with an accomplish'd Poem is, for a Time, at least, restored to Paradise' (264).

Although the violence of poetry is figurative, then, it nonetheless 'forces' a reconciliation of fractured, postlapsarian history with the divine 'regularity' of providential history's even, extended succession. Morillo reads this as describing a *momentary* recreation of a 'prelapsarian, paradisal state of harmony between the faculties' which prefigures Wordsworth's static 'spots of time': 'even though poetry acts to restore the happier primitive state, it can only do so "for a time, at least"'.[99] However, in light of the 'successive Surprizes' in the preface to *Advancement and Reformation* and of the emphasis on time, space, motion and action in the *Te Deum* and in the Laocoon passage, I would argue that Dennis is rather suggesting that the individual moments and events of Christian history might be enchained by the transcendent experience of sublime poetic 'action' which characterizes 'the Greater Poetry', and that 'for a time, at least' measures the span of the poem in question.[100]

(iii) Losing the plot: time and space in Addison's *Spectator* essays

For many, including fellow Whigs, such methods for reconciling the disturbing remnants of past violence within present discourse seemed merely to perpetuate them in new forms, and the caricatures of Dennis sketched by Pope and taken up by others depict him as irascible in the extreme, as though he were a living emblem of the delusions,

[99] Morillo, *Uneasy Feelings*, pp. 18, 29.
[100] The temporal extension Dennis accords to the sublime is also suggested in a section of *Grounds of Criticism* dedicated to showing, by Longinus's 'authority, that religious Ideas are the most proper to give Greatness and Sublimity to a Discourse' (p. 357), where Dennis includes among Longinus's 'Marks of the sublime' that its 'Impression lasts, and is difficult to be defaced' (p. 360).

fanaticism and turmoil of the previous century.[101] As a result, writers who were influenced by him were in general careful to tone down the more controversial aspects of his criticism. Despite the many points on which he and Dennis agree, for example, Addison is typically careful to separate the loaded term 'enthusiasm', which in his *Spectator* essays is generally used in a negative sense, from the aesthetic and literary category of the 'great' or 'sublime'.[102] Even the latter comes under scrutiny in a short series of *Spectators* in 1712, where Thomas Tickell extends Addison's ambiguous distinctions between true and false wit in early numbers to correlate it with a true and a false sublime, presumably to ensure exemption from false sublimity for his own poem, 'The Royal Progress', which appears in the same paper.[103]

The latent potential for falsity explains why Mr. Spectator discreetly buries his wit and enthusiasm beneath a politely smooth, sociable discourse. The success of this procedure becomes clear when we find modern critics suggesting that Addison essentially rejects the sublime as a significant aesthetic category. Scott Black claims that although 'Addison does write of things that will be explained by the sublime', they aren't written of 'in sublime terms', and he proceeds to draw on Addison's analyses of the

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[101] C.f. Pope, *The Dunciad in Four Books*, Book I, where Dulness sees 'all the mighty Mad [dunces of the past] in Dennis rage.' (l. 106). Of course, Dennis himself was concerned to police the overwhelming poetic forces he admired. Morillo has described how, in *Grounds of Criticism*, distinctions of degree, tacitly distinguishing social class, are used to effectively remove 'vulgar' or 'ordinary' (i.e. lower-class) enthusiasm from the equation, allowing the poet, poem and reader unlimited inspiration, transport, elevation and expansion without disturbing the status quo. (Morillo, *Uneasy Feelings*, pp. 36-39)

[102] See for instance a letter to Mr. Spectator in no. 396, which refers to the Quakers' 'Vagaries of Error and Enthusiasm', iii, 484. Elsewhere the characterization of enthusiasm is more ambiguous, as in no. 407, which uses the 'transport[ing] effects of 'the Bellowings and Distortions of Enthusiasm' as an example of the effectiveness of vehement rhetoric whilst distinguishing such 'Nonsence' from 'admirable Discourses' (iii, p. 522). Tellingly, the most positive inflection is given to the term in one of the essays on *Paradise Lost*, where he writes of the 'Morning Hymn' of Book V that '[i]nvocations of this Nature fill the Mind with glorious Ideas of God's Works, and awaken that Divine Enthusiasm, which is so natural to Devotion.' (no. 327, iii, p. 200).

[103] See nos. 616, 617, which give examples of false wit, but the letter of no. 617 contains verse excerpts later referred to in no. 620 as an example of the false sublime to which Tickell's own poem is contrasted (iii, pp. 105-111, 117-123).

Georgics and the *Metamorphoses* to argue that the novel and the strange, rather than the great or the beautiful, are the vital parameters in Addisonian aesthetics.[104] However, although his version of it might differ from the 'Kantian' or 'romantic' variations invoked by Black, Addison clearly found the sublime useful.[105] Not only does he see it as crucial to the 'Language' of epic (no. 285, iii, 10), but his critical writings regularly apply the term to various artworks and phenomena, not least in the reading of *Paradise Lost*, and in his poetry he makes adept use of imagery and pre-texts widely recognized as sublime.[106]

Addison's tactic is rather to keep the sublime separate from its religio-political equivalents, and this circumscription is a significant task within *The Spectator*. In 'Joseph Addison and the Pleasures of *Sharawadgi*' Tony Brown summarises what he sees as the difference between Dennis's and Addison's criticism in his statement that '[i]n contrast with Dennis, Addison directs the effects of enthusiasm away from heavy religious control and toward palliative bourgeois gratification'.[107] 'Heavy religious control' misrepresents Dennis's poetic theory somewhat, given that it is based on the principle that the reader's primary goal is pleasure. Equally, Addison's aesthetic theory is more than just a means of 'palliative bourgeois gratification'; as Robert Mayhew and

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[104] Scott Black, 'Addison's Aesthetics of Novelty', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 30 (2001), 269-88, (p. 270). Black takes his lead from a similar argument by Ronald Paulson that in the 'Pleasures of the Imagination' essays, greatness and beauty are ultimately subsumed into novelty and strangeness. (Ronald Paulson, *The Beautiful, Novel, and Strange: Aesthetics and Heterodoxy* (Baltimore, MI; London: John Hopkins UP, 1996), esp. pp. 48-75).

[105] Black, p. 270.

[106] In no. 160 he notes that '*Milton*'s chief Talent, and indeed his distinguishing Excellence, lies in the Sublimity of his Thoughts.' (ii, p. 587). Elsewhere in *The Spectator* he uses 'sublime' to describe passages in the Old Testament (ii, p. 127). His most celebrated verse composition, *The Campaign*, was widely admired for its 'sublime' depiction of Marlborough as an angel, who 'pleas'd th'Almighty's orders to perform,/ Rides in the whirl-wind, and directs the storm', echoing Psalms 18:10. Addison, 'The Campaign (1705)' in A.C. Guthkelch, ed., *The Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Addison*, 2 vols (London: G. Bell, 1914), i, pp. 155-170 (ll. 291-2).

[107] Tony C. Brown, 'Joseph Addison and the Pleasures of Sharawadgi', *ELH*, 74:1 (2007), 171-93 (p. 183).

Jacob Sider Jost have shown, it functions as part of an intrinsically ethical and religious didactic program whereby the essays aim at moral reformation of their readership.[108] However, the distinction does evoke Addison's unwillingness to make the kind of direct link between divine will and private experience represented by Dennis's 'enthusiastic passion'.

Addison gets around the problem of encouraging and celebrating Whig-oriented morality and devotion without recourse to enthusiasm partly by adopting a different manner from that of his critical forbear. Where Dennis's rhetoric is strenuous, insistent, excited, Addison's prose is, famously, 'easy' and even-toned.[109] Where Dennis aims energetically to reconcile 'contending parties', Addison (with his co-authors) announces that the *Spectator* essays will promote an equivalent 'peace' by exercizing discretion: 'as I am very sensible my paper would lose its whole Effects, should it run into the Outrages of a Party, I shall take Care to keep clear of everything which looks that Way'.[110] Although every bit as politically partisan as Dennis (if not more so) Addison discards Dennis's polemical terminology of 'enthusiasm' and 'passion' in discussing the sublime and instead employs the less controversial categories of novelty, strangeness and, most importantly, greatness.[111]

Addison also manages the mechanisms of enthusiasm (and wit) in more complex ways. The polite, easy tone of Mr. Spectator is, often, also ironic, and ironic distance

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[108] Robert Mayhew, 'Latitudinarian Theology, Literature and Landscape in Early Eighteenth-century England', *Q/W/E/R/T/Y* 10 (2000), 189-206, offers a persuasive argument for the important place that religion, and latitudinarian theology in particular, occupy in Addison's writings. Sider Jost's fascinating article makes a similar point: Jacob Sider Jost, 'The Afterlife and *The Spectator*', *SEL,* 51:3 (2011), 605-24.
[109] See for e.g. Johnson's description of Addison's prose style as 'always equable, and always easy, without glowing words or pointed sentences' ('Life of Addison', in *The Lives of the Poets*, iii, pp. 1-38: p. 38).
[110] *Spectator* no. 16, i, pp. 72-3.
[111] Unlike Dennis, Addison was actively engaged in party politics, holding a series of posts in Whig governments from 1715 onwards; he also produced fifty-five issues of *The Freeholder: Or Political Essays* (1716), a periodical overtly committed to the dissemination of party sentiment.

becomes especially significant whenever a potential for controversy or blasphemy arises.[112] Such tonal subtleties, I will argue, are also reflected formally, in a type of discursive fragmentation which is not simply a defining attribute of the essay genre. Rather, it is employed by Addison to privilege literary fragmentariness and circumscribed narrative and thus to isolate and stabilize the extraordinarily expansive temporal dynamics of the essays' didactic psychology, which limns a variant of the sublime that recalls the successive effects of Dennis's enthusiasm.

As such, Addison's Mr. Spectator seems actively to discriminate against extensive literature. When he performs a reading of *Paradise Lost* across a series of weekly essays, therefore, he follows Dennis in celebrating the poem as a triumph of British literature, but combines Dennis's practice of generous citation with critical techniques from Dryden, reading the poem in terms of its 'beauties', atomic and essentially ekphrastic fragments from which narrative time has effectively been excised and displaced onto the critic-reader. Despite this, as we shall see, the bulk of meaning proves hard to erase and the reader must work his way through it, in time, in order to benefit from its instruction. The displacement of narrative or plot, on the other hand, is permanent. In what follows, I describe how Addison in the periodical constructs a model of reading that brackets its enthusiastic claims within ironic quotation, and argue that this technique underwrites the complex relation between the parts and whole of the *Spectator*, which in its turn affects

[112] For our purposes 'irony' may be defined as 'a Figure in Speech, wherein we plainly intend something very different from what our Words express' (Ephraim Chambers, *Chambers, Cyclopædia: or, an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, 2 vols (1728) in *ECCO* [accessed 19 Feb. 2012], vol. 2, p. 406. See also 'verbal irony' in Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan, eds., *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993), p. 635. However, in papers describing Mr. Spectator's adventures a degree of dramatic irony often obtains.

his representation of greatness, especially in the essays devoted to the long poem that Dennis so admired.

Michelle Syba notes that 'Addison's attention to the act of reading has long interested academic readers, marking a shift away from early eighteenth-century critics' focus on authorial intentions and powers'. 'Recent studies', she continues, frequently 'observe how Addison advocates a newly engaged kind of reading'.[113] However, neither Syba's compelling article nor the 'recent studies' to which she refers take much notice of the fact that in this transfer of critical power from author to reader, the kind of textual engagement Addison enacts and advocates within the *Spectator* sometimes borders on manipulative distortion, be it witty or enthusiastic. As he repeatedly rejects passive reading in favour of actively using the text for instruction or pleasure, literature as a physical and temporal phenomenon loses its solidity and stability. In the process, literary length is steadily devalued in favour of literary variety, but this demotion remains inflected by irony.

The way in which Addison avoids overt enthusiasm as philosopher, critic and reader may be seen in an essay that Michael Ketcham uses to demonstrate the Lockean basis of Addison's 'psychology of time', paper number 94, in which he paraphrases a passage from Book II of *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*:[114]

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[113] Michelle Syba, 'After Design: Joseph Addison Discovers Beauties', *SEL*, 49:3 (2009), 615-35 (pp. 616-7). See for e.g. Black, 'Addison's Aesthetics of Novelty', Margaret J. M. Ezell, 'Mr Spectator on Readers and the Conspicuous Consumption of Literature', *Literature Compass*, 1:1 (2003-2004), Michael G. Ketcham, *Transparent Designs: Reading, Performance and Form in the Spectator Papers* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985); Samuel Baudry, 'Acte de lecture et idéologie de la culture selon Joseph Addison', *Bulletin de la Societé d'Etudes Anglo-Americaines des XVIIe et XVIIIe Siecles*, 48 (1999), 177-94; Neil Saccamo, 'The Sublime Force of Words in Addison's "Pleasures"', *ELH*, 58:1 (1991), 83-106.
[114] Ketcham, *Transparent Designs*, p. 82.

> Mr. *Lock* observes, 'That we get the Idea of Time, or Duration, by reflecting on that Train of Ideas which succeed one another in our Minds: That for this Reason, when we sleep soundly without dreaming, we have no Perception of Time, or the Length of it, whilst we sleep; and that the Moment wherein we leave off to think, till the Moment we begin to think again, seem to have no Distance. (i, 399)

This passage, which summarizes paragraph four of chapter 14, picks up on Locke's recasting of Hobbes's 'trayne' or 'consequence' of 'successive ideas' within a more rigorously empirical epistemology.[115] Another echo of *Leviathan*'s epistemological model might be heard at the start of the same chapter of the *Essay*, where Locke contrasts the 'permanent parts of space' with the 'fleeting and perpetually perishing parts of succession' which 'we call *duration*', recalling Hobbes's definition of memory or imagination as '*decaying sense*'.[116] As we saw earlier, Hobbes uses his definition to suggest that what Locke calls the 'fleeting and perpetually perishing' nature of 'duration' prevents the mind from entertaining any valid concept of eternity.[117] Of course, unlike Hobbes, Locke is at pains to fit his empiricism into a (superficially, at least) orthodox Christian framework and he quickly asserts that the 'idea' of eternity is consonant with human capacities. Hobbes's 'trayne' is directed and moved by the passions, whereas the succession of ideas in Locke's 'train' 'succeed one another in our minds at certain

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[115] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 20.

[116] John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by Roger Woolhouse, revised edn (London: Penguin, 2004), II. xiv.1. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 16. On Locke's distinction between duration and time, see Maximillian E. Novak, 'The Extended Moment', in *Probability, Time, and Space in Eighteenth-Century Literature*, ed. by Paula R. Backschneider (New York: AMS Press, 1979), pp. 140-66 (pp. 118-119).

[117] C.f. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 23-24. The effort Locke makes to force Hobbes's 'trayne' into a formulation that allows for the 'ideas' of eternity and infinity should be understood in the context of widespread contemporary hostility to Hobbes's ideas, or at least, to the ideas with which Hobbes had become associated. As Jon Parkin notes, Locke was evasive regarding the influence of Hobbes on his own thought: although 'Locke was not only familiar with (and very concerned about) public understandings of Hobbism,' but 'also owned *Leviathan* and critiques of it', he claimed 'not to have known what was in Hobbes's book', which seems to have been 'a distinctive strategy for preserving his reputation' in the face of widespread 'anti-Hobbism'' (John Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan: the Reception of the Political and Religious Ideas of Thomas Hobbes in England, 1646-1700* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), p. 401).

distances' which seem to be more-or-less regular, and are regulated by human capacities: 'there seem to be *certain bounds to the quickness and slowness of the succession of* those ideas one to another in our minds, beyond which they can neither delay nor hasten'.[118] It is, presumably, the approximate regularity and universality of the train of ideas that allows mankind to develop collective measures of time, thereby guaranteeing at the level of probability the universality and stability of the idea of eternity, which like infinity of space is metonymic of God's infinite power.[119]

However, as William Walker suggests, the assumption made by critics such as Brian McCrea and Ronald Paulson that Addison's use of Lockean epistemology consists of 'simple adoption or expression' is undermined by a number of points at which 'Addison departs from Locke': there are 'important differences between what Locke says in [the *Essay*] about perception, truth, pleasures, delusion, art, passion, and language, and what Addison says about them.'[120] A telling example of this is described by John Sitter when he dissects Addison's quotation of Locke's definitions of wit in *Spectator* number 62, revealing various tactical elisions and alterations as well as the addition of a reference to the '*Delight* and *Surprize* wit gives to the Reader' that is absent from Locke's account, suggesting an incursion of Dennis's energetic poetics into the easiness of essayistic philosophy.[121] Equally, Sitter notes, this paper closes with a disarmingly casual extension of Locke's definition of wit as the faculty that finds resemblances to include 'another of a quite contrary Nature to it […] For not only the *Resemblance* but the *Opposition* does very often produce Wit; as I could shew in several little Points, Turns,

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[118] Locke, *Essay*, II. xiv. 9.
[119] Ibid., II. xiv. 30-31; xvii. 1.
[120] William Walker, 'Addison's mastery of Locke', *1650-1850*, 8 (2001), 45-76 (pp. 46-7).
[121] John Sitter, *Arguments of Augustan Wit* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), p. 63. The quotation from essay 62 is in vol. i, p. 264 of Bond's edition.

and Antitheses, that I may possibly enlarge upon in some future Speculation.' (i, 269-70) This conclusion is itself a surprising point, turn and antithesis and '[a]s on many other topics,' Sitter concludes, 'Addison seems […] here to be agreeable rather than in agreement [with Locke]'.[122]

In much the same way, the direct and indirect quotations of Locke in *Spectator* 94 do in fact mask a significant 'difference' between what Locke says about time, and what Addison says about it. Crucially, Addison chooses to ignore the 'bounds' Locke places on the speed of the 'train of ideas'. To the quotation from Locke he adds Malebranche's conjecture that 'it is possible some Creatures may think Half an Hour as long as we do a thousand Years; or look upon that Space of Duration which we call a Minute, as an Hour, a Week, a Month, or an whole Age' in order to argue a rather different point: that 'our Notion of Time is produced by our reflecting on the Succession of Ideas in our Mind' and that 'this Succession may be infinitely accelerated or retarded', so that 'by applying ourselves diligently to the Pursuits of Knowledge' 'we may extend Life beyond its natural Dimensions'.[123] Not only does this argument playfully alter Locke's psychology and distort Malebranche's hypothesis, Addison here also shifts from a discussion of the experience of duration to life's actual time-span. Accelerated mental activity not only *seems* to extend time, it can actually extend 'Life' itself. Into the logical lacuna between the statement about 'our *Notion* of Time' at the start of the paper, and the conclusion that 'we may extend our *Life*' (my emphases) at the end of it, he inserts two exotic tales which

[122] Sitter, *Arguments of Augustan Wit*, p. 64n.
[123] *The Spectator*, i, pp. 399, 401. The theological impact of this theory may be seen in *Spectators* 110 and 111, where Addison argues the immortality of the soul on the basis of its capacities for infinite improvement, 'the perpetual Progress of the Soul to its Perfection, without a Possibility of ever arriving it' – here again, infinite expansion of time is logically 'caused' by the capacities of the soul or mind (i, p. 457).

relate instances of magical expansions of time experienced within the compass of a moment. Hence, by interpolating overtly fictitious, pagan histories, he diverts his discourse into unsteady narrative frameworks which further distance his own essay from the logical rigour of Locke's.

(iv) Reading greatness

These complex rhetorical shifts suggest the ways in which Addison elides the points of discursive tension associated with Dennis's temporal poetics, and will thus provide a framework for understanding the methodology of his discussions of *Paradise Lost* and 'greatness'. However, paper 94 can also be understood as an exercise in interpretative licence, with the manipulation of excerpts from Locke and Malebranche resembling a playful version of the commonplacing techniques recommended by Locke himself in 'A New method of a Common-Place Book' (1706).[124] The periodical's readers seem to be encouraged to engage in such practices too:

> I shall leave my Reader to compare these Eastern Fables with the Notions of those two great Philosophers whom I have quoted in this Paper; and shall only, by way of Application, desire him to consider how we may extend Life beyond its natural Dimensions, by applying ourselves diligently to the Pursuits of Knowledge (iii, 104)

In other words, the process of interpretation is displaced onto the reader, whose responsibility it is to reconcile original source with inaccurate paraphrase, religious belief

[124] John Locke, *Posthumous Works of Mr. John Locke ...To which is added, VI. His new method of a common-place book.* (1706) in *ECCO* [accessed February 2009]. Of course, Locke's method is more systematic, but it nonetheless encouraged eighteenth-century readers to plunder texts for passages that might suit their own concerns and allow them to express polite taste. See David Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), pp. 50-51, 63-70, and Lucia Dacome, 'Noting the Mind: Commonplace Books and the Pursuit of the Self in Eighteenth-century Britain', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 65:4 (2004), 603-25.

with moral behaviour, and the potential enthusiasm of total temporal elasticity with the virtuous 'Pursuit of Knowledge' it seems to encourage (the conditional 'may extend' is particularly significant in this respect).

A similar process of interpretative transference occurs in essay number 46, in which Mr. Spectator's 'Papers of Minutes' for his forthcoming essay are discovered by 'a Cluster of People' who immediately start speculating on the significance of the random items listed in them, which are so disparate that the author expects they 'would look like a Rhapsody of Nonsense to any Body but' himself (i, 196). Although this sketch of an essay ultimately proves indecipherable to the coffee-house readers, its suggestively miscellaneous variety is a source of much merriment, and provokes various creative interpretations, some more intelligent than others (197-8). The most witty suggestion (which resonates with the ironic tones of Mr. Spectator himself) is that 'some Body […] had been taking Notes out of the Spectator' (197), since of course the list will 'later' be cited without expansions in the essay for the entertainment of the periodical's readers. The list thus collapses the various time-frames, real and fictional, which enclose the periodical; it simultaneously traces the moment of composition by Addison as himself and/or as Mr. Spectator, the narrated time in which the list is read by various people in the coffee-house, and, prophetically, readings of the paper as published on the 23rd of April.

The disjunctive form of the list, with elliptic dashes separating items, effectively provides the entertainment of a full essay in compressed form. Tellingly, it starts with 'Sir *Roger de Coverly*'s Country-Seat —— Yes, for I hate long Speeches —— Query, if a good Christian may be a Conjuror' (196). If the third item might be read as the

question to which the 'magical' and potentially blasphemous manipulations of time in paper 94 provide the answer, the second suggests that the list's compressed brevity is related to a bias against length.[125]

This corresponds with Addison's statements elsewhere in *The Spectator* which associate semantic compression with a virtuous plenitude of mind and of time to such an extent that literary length becomes undesirable. A significant instance of this bias is the 'motto' of *Spectator* 124, 'A great book is a great evil', appropriately taken from the *Fragments* of Callimachus. In the essay Mr. Spectator mocks the 'voluminous Writer' as merely dull:

> A [Man] who publishes his Works in a Volume, has an infinite Advantage over one who communicates his Writings to the World in loose Tracts and single Pieces. We do not expect to meet with any thing in a bulky Volume, till after some heavy Preamble, and several Words of Course, to prepare the Reader for what follows: Nay Authors have established it as a Kind of Rule, That a Man ought to be dull sometimes; as the most severe Reader makes Allowances for many Rests and Nodding-places in a voluminous Writer. (i, 505-6)

'On the contrary,' he continues, 'those who publish their Thoughts in distinct Sheets, and as it were by Piece-meal, have none of these Advantages. We must immediately fall into our Subject and treat every part of it in a lively Manner, or our Papers are thrown by as dull and insipid: Our Matter must lie close together' (506). The fragmentary and the pointed are explicitly lauded above the extensive and dilatory.

The essay itself is particularly disjointed, as if ironically exaggerating the essay's status as a collection of fragments whilst exemplifying the 'Chymical Method' of 'giv[ing] the Virtue of a full Draught in a few Drops' – which is contrasted favourably

[125] Bearing in mind the first entry on the list, which resembles a stage direction, the second might be a transcription of a comment by Sir Roger himself, although of the two Mr. Spectator is the least loquacious.

with ‘the Galenick Way’ whereby ‘Medicines are made up in large Quantities’ (i, 506). Once again, an ‘increase’ of meaning is paradoxically achieved by semantic compression, and as in essays 94 and 46 this is achieved by displacing the interpretative process of connecting up the different topics from author to reader. Thus the essay moves from its consideration of extensiveness versus concision to the value of the public nature of the periodical, the benefit that printing gives to the diffusion of knowledge, the success of the *Spectator* as testified by readers’ letters, and the comparison of ‘Men of no Taste nor Learning’ who dislike it to ‘Moles’ who ‘withdraw themselves into a wilful Obscurity’. In effect, the reader is being asked to recognize him- or herself as either a ‘Person of the best Sense in both sexes’ (an able interpreter) or a ‘Mole’ (who will make no sense of the fragments).[126]

The playfulness of this distinction becomes clearer still if the reader notices that the essay’s overall argument is in fact a striking inversion of Dryden’s in the dedication to his *Æneis*, which uses the same chemical metaphor to set tragedy (short form) against epic (extensive form) in order to argue the latter’s pre-eminence as a method of moral ‘cure’: ‘Tragedy is the miniature of Humane Life; an Epick Poem is the draught at length’,[127] and therefore they work their ‘improvements’ at different paces:

> An Epick Poem is not in so much haste; it works leisurely; the Changes which it makes are slow; but the Cure is likely to be more perfect. The effects of Tragedy […] are too

[126] C.f. *The Government of the Tongue* regarding those who question the truth of Scripture: ‘they want learning or industry to sound the depth of those sacred treasures, and therefore they decry the Scripture as mean and poor; and to justify their own wisdom, dispute God’s. This is as if the mole should complain the sun is dark, because he dwells under ground, and sees not its splendour.’ Richard Allestree, *The Government of the Tongue. By the author of The Whole Duty of Man, &c*, 6th edn (Oxford, 1702) in *ECCO* [accessed Feb 2012]. If this is a deliberate allusion, it would seem to undercut the apparent rejection of ‘great books’, since of course one of the bulkiest volumes of all is the Bible.

[127] ‘Dedication of the Æneis’ in John Dryden, *Poems: The Works of Virgil in English, 1697*, ed. by William Frost, vol. 6 of 20, *The Works of John Dryden* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 267-341 (p. 269).

> violent to be lasting. Chymical Medicines are observ'd to Relieve oft'ner than to Cure: For'tis the nature of Spirits to make swift impressions, but not deep. *Galenical* Decoctions, to which I may properly compare an Epick Poem, have more of Body in them; they work by their substance and their weight.[128]

The challenge set by the contrast between the 'Mole' and the 'Person of the best Sense' is not insignificant, since the appropriation and inversion of Dryden's argument is difficult to interpret.

On the one hand, Addison seems to be emphasizing his originality in departing from neoclassical precedent, and daring the reader of taste to applaud his temerity and take advantage of the performance. He may also be marking out a political position, making clear to readers that despite his past celebrations of Dryden in verse and prose, his own critical and – implicitly – political judgment is capable of distinguishing his model's failings. Like the Whig Marlborough in *The Campaign*, the virtue of the 'chymical' method lies in its violence, linking it with the brief but militarily eventful reign of the House of Orange against the extensive 'galenical' rule of the Stuarts.[129] On the other hand, the source for his descriptions of the 'bulky Volume' is authoritative and does contradict them, and the disjunction between the different topics in the essay may be deliberately, comically exaggerated beyond what Addison himself would consider decorous. This would suggest a kind of ironic self-mockery or self-caricature which similarly tests the reader's ability to perceive 'what is meant' from 'what is said', a reading which would tally with Dryden's own comical self-deprecation in the 'Dedication', where references to the length of the epic form the basis of a running joke

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[128] 'Dedication of the *Æneis*', p. 270.

[129] See p. 54, footnote 106 for reference; celebrating the battle of Blenheim as a Whig victory, the poem's gory scenes of war are superintended by the sublimely vengeful Marlborough. See Abigail Williams, 'Patronage and Whig literary Culture in the Early Eighteenth Century', in *'Cultures of Whiggism': New Essays on English Literature and Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. by David Womersley, Paddy Bullard, and Abigail Williams (Newark: Delaware UP, 2005), pp. 149-72 (pp. 141-2).

on the long-windedness of the dedication: ‘I have dwelt so long on this Subject, that I must contract what I have to say, in reference to my Translation: Unless I wou’d swell my Preface into a Volume, and make it formidable to your Lordship [the Earl of Mulgrave], when you see so many Pages yet behind.’ (318)

The Dryden allusion is not the last of the challenges faced by readers of essay 124. They must also detect within it both of the options suggested by the statement that ‘At the same Time, notwithstanding some Papers may be made up of broken Hints and Irregular Sketches, it is often expected that every Sheet should be a kind of Treatise, and make out in Thought what it wants in Bulk: That a Point of Humour should be worked up in all its Parts; and a Subject touched upon in its most essential Articles, without the Repetitions, Tautologies, and Enlargements that are indulg’d to longer Labours’ (ibid.). By whom is this ‘expected’? The essay doesn’t tell us, but like Dennis’s Longinian claim for the immanent regularity of apparently irregular poetry, Addison here seems to be making the point that a text may exhibit apparent disjointedness while in fact having the coherence and profundity of a formal ‘Treatise’. According to this scheme one could say that the unity of parts within a literary whole oscillates between the extremes of regularity (the fixed, fully-determined coherence exhibited by a syllogism or a mathematical equation) and irregularity (a mere collection of broken fragments). The performance of these extremes within the one text, that is the replication of providential regularity-within-irregularity, is represented here as the prerogative of the ‘loose Tract’ or ‘Individual Piece’ and not sustainable in the ‘bulky Volume’, where ‘repetition, tautology and enlargement’ add ‘dullness’ to the composition and dilute the relation between part and whole.

(v) Miniature greatness and the beauties of *Paradise Lost*

In opposition to Dennis's focus on 'the Greater Poetry', then, Addison's accounts of text seem to privilege disjunctive structure and compact brevity over the continuity and fulsomeness of 'great' books but, equally unlike Dennis, the impact of the text is not limited to its temporal span but can be extended by means of reflection. It is as though the temporal 'enthusiasm' of Addison's devotional didacticism has to be mitigated or controlled by a corresponding textual restraint, with the modest brevity and tonal evenness of the essays a guarantee of their epistemological moderation: greatness, whether in the form of sublime language or literary length, is the casualty. This logic proves challenging when Addison comes to consider the natural world in the 1712 series of essays on 'the pleasures of the imagination', given the traditional Christian as well as more recent physico-theological celebrations of its literal greatness as a sign of its divine creator. However, once again, this time thanks to the distinction between primary and secondary pleasures, the malleability of linguistic representation provides a solution.

As a primary quality, 'greatness' is one of the three core pleasures 'which arise from the actual View and Survey of outward Objects' and is defined as 'not only […] the Bulk of any single Object, but the Largeness of a whole View, considered as one entire Piece' (iii, 540). Examples of such greatness in nature include 'the Prospects of an open Champian Country, a vast uncultivated Desart, of huge Heaps of Mountains, high Rocks and Precipes, or a wide Expanse of Waters, where we are […] struck […] with that rude kind of Magnificence which appears in many of these stupendous Works of Nature.' (ibid.) This list reprises some of the instances Dennis had given of sublime topics from

nature, although, interestingly, it leaves out 'processes' (such as earthquakes, floods and thunderstorms) and includes only those that are static objects.[130] Similarly, it seems at first that Addison's greatness does not move or transport like Dennis's sublime but instead 'fills' and 'stills' the soul, keeping a figurative proportion between the image viewed and its idea within the mind: 'Our Imagination loves to be filled with an Object, or to graspe at any thing that is too big for its Capacity. We are flung into a pleasing Astonishment at such unbounded Views, and feel a delightful Stillness and Amazement in the Soul at the Apprehension of them' (iii, 540).

This fixity may, as in the typical Addisonian allegories discussed by Tony Brown, allow natural 'greatness' to represent reliably the 'Final Cause' of 'our Delight' in it, which is to encourage the contemplation of the 'Supreme Author of our Being'.[131] However, when Addison describes the effects of greatness in the context of the divine his terms change and seem to reprise Dennis's vocabulary of affective motion:

'Our Admiration, which is a very pleasing Motion of the Mind, immediately rises at the Consideration of any Object that takes up a great deal of room in the Fancy, and, by consequence, will improve to the highest pitch of Astonishment and Devotion when we contemplate his Nature' (iii, 545). The fancy or imagination is a passive receptacle to be filled by images of the vast, but the mind can be moved, and a paradoxical coexistence of stasis with motion attends the incursion of divine immensity into mortal experience, replicating Dennis's chiastic succession of tragic surprises 'from Compassion to Terror, and from Terror to Compassion again'.[132]

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[130] See Dennis, *Critical Works*, i, p. 361.
[131] *The Spectator*, iii, 545. See Brown, 'Joseph Addison and the Pleasures of Sharawadgi', p. 176.
[132] Dennis, *Critical Works*, i, p. 201.

How does this positive but unstable 'greatness', with its overtones of Dennis's enthusiastic vastness, correlate with the merely vacuous expansion ascribed to 'great books'? The distinction between the two positions is negotiated with some finesse through the 'Pleasures of the Imagination' essays, which gradually alter the frame of the argument as they move from primary to secondary pleasures. The process begins in essay 415, which discusses the pleasures of architecture. In the context of art, greatness becomes problematic, since human artefacts cannot replicate the vast scale of nature (iii, 548-9). Of all the art-forms architecture comes the closest to nature, 'has a more immediate Tendency, than any other, to produce those primary Pleasures of the Imagination', and reprises nature's literal greatness by means of 'bulk and body of the structure' (i, 553). Architectural greatness is exemplified, says Addison, by the works of 'the Antients', especially 'among the Eastern Nations of the World' which are 'infinitely superior to the Moderns'. Thus, in the discussion of divine final causes of the 'pleasure of greatness' in human art, evidence (the 'Antient' and 'Eastern' monuments, many of which no longer exist) is separated from theory (the immense size of the greatest buildings resembles the divine immensity of God's 'monument', nature) by both time and space, resulting in yet another interpretative lacuna.

The potential blasphemy of equating human creations with God's Creation is thus avoided by situating the examples of literally 'great Architecture' at an exaggerated discursive remove from eighteenth-century London, at the outer margins of historical fact and geographical familiarity. This distancing has the effect of abstracting 'greatness' from the physical realities of here and now, and from textual greatness. The process is accelerated when Addison develops the overlap between quantitative and qualitative and

between literal and figurative apparent in the association of earthly with divine greatness in order to switch from asserting the devotional value of literal architectural greatness to considering the effects of architectural '*Greatness of Manner*',

> which has such force upon the Imagination, that a small Building, where *it* appears, shall give the Mind nobler Ideas than one of twenty times the Bulk, where the Manner is ordinary or little. Thus, perhaps, a Man would have been more astonished with the Majestic Air that appears in one of *Lysippus*'s Statues of *Alexander*, tho' no bigger than the Life, than he might have been with Mount *Athos*, had it been cut into the Figure of the Heroe, according to the Proposal of *Phidias*, with a River in one Hand, and a City in the other (iii, 555)

In this passage metaphorical, qualitative greatness is suddenly given precedence over physical greatness, echoing the promotion of the 'Chymical' method of composition over the 'Galenic' in essay 124. Where the eastern nations could only represent 'greatness' by means of literal bulk, classical civilization instead achieves figurative imitation. The final shift from the positive valuation of literal greatness to the triumph of figurative grandeur comes, of course, in the essays on poetry, where the 'secondary pleasures' of language take precedence over nature such that '[w]ords, when well chosen, have so great a Force in them, that a Description often gives us more lively Ideas than the Sight of Things themselves […] In this Case the Poet seems to get the better of Nature' (iii, 560). 'Force', one of Dennis' favourite terms and conveniently dimensionless, supersedes size, and thus the 'greatness' of Homer appears 'when he is describing a Battel or a Multitude, a Heroe or a God' (564). These subjects are 'magnificent' as much as 'great' and the literal extent of the description itself is insignificant.

Given all the rhetorical contortions and ambiguities associated with the space and time of text, 'greatness' (literal and figurative) in actual literary works becomes

somewhat problematic. Addison, of course, produced criticism on a number of the major canonical long poems, including not only *Paradise Lost*, but Homer's *Iliad,* Virgil's *Aeneid* and *Georgics*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. As noted above, the writings on the *Georgics* and the *Metamorphoses* in particular have been used by recent critics to argue Addison's preference for the middle style. However, rather than rejecting the sublime, Addison, as I have suggested, instead tends to set his claims for the 'sublime force of words' (to use Neil Saccamo's phrase) against their equally liberating and dangerous potential for misdirection and wit, with the ever-present gap between what is said and what is meant, between Mr. Spectator and the 'serious' authors behind him, between text and topic, or between primary and secondary pleasures, holding the balance.[133] Thus the series of *Spectator* essays on *Paradise Lost*, which describes – and enacts – a reading of the poem via the brief spans of multiple essays, is not marginal but central to understanding Addison's literary theory.

Syba's article, 'After Design: Joseph Addison Discovers Beauties', describes how, from introducing *Paradise Lost* as a 'monumental design about a monumental divine design' in the course of the first six essays of the series, Addison adopts a method inaugurated by Dryden and shifts to a much longer and more detailed enumeration – and in many cases, full quotation – of the multiple 'beauties' of the poem, 'parsing literature to its smallest unit' while placing them in a 'quasi-synecdochic relation' to the 'design' or whole.[134] In doing so, she notes, 'his criticism eventually reassigns greatness, becoming

[133] Saccamo, 'The Sublime Force of Words in Addison's "Pleasures"', p. 83.
[134] Syba, 'After Design: Joseph Addison Discovers Beauties', p. 618. Syba briefly notes that Dryden's invocation of 'beauties' in 'A Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire' informs Addison's initial description of them as related to the overall 'design' (p. 16). However, Dryden also invokes 'beauties' in the prefaces to his various translations of Ovid, and here they become relatively independent of structure or design.

engrossed by the poem's "great beauties"' (619), replicating the pattern described earlier in this chapter, in which Addison repeatedly promotes the semantically dense fragment over extensive works, and figurative over literal greatness. Since the excerpts quoted are generally assessed in very general terms – as sublime, beautiful, lofty and so on – it is left to the reader to examine the passages and develop the appropriate responses. However, just as essay 124 seems to offer a more conservative and positive assessment of great books beneath the surface mockery of vacuous bulk, the initial discussion of *Paradise Lost* according to older, neoclassical principles is not undermined but supplemented by the less theoretically-encumbered turn to beauties, as though the series were designed to cater to all kinds of readers, whether the well-versed in Ancient and Modern literature, those wishing to become so, or those simply looking for a collection of imaginative pleasures.

Furthermore, the poem ultimately remains monumental despite being parcelled into essay- and reader-friendly morsels, as though having to contend with a well-known, modern British text had obstructed the manipulative processes enacted in the earlier papers. In essay 369, when Addison looks back on his discussion of *Paradise Lost* and summarizes the topics he has treated, he concludes that

> Had I thought, at my first engaging in this Design, that it would have led me to so great a length, I believe I should never have entered upon it; but the kind Reception which it has met with among those whose Judgments I have a Value for, as well as the uncommon Demands which my Bookseller tells me have been made for these particular Discourses, give me no Reason to repent of the Pains I have been at in composing them. (iii, 392)

Of course, the statement deploys elements of the conventional modesty topos, but it also represents a rare instance when the consequences of the semantic compression advocated

by Mr. Spectator become visible within the essays: the 'heroick' poem, even when fragmented and distilled into 'great beauties', has taken months to digest. True greatness, it seems, cannot be elided, and the extent of the genuinely great poem can only be parsed in time, at length, and at the cost of great 'pains'. Working his way through the poem as would a reader, Mr. Spectator's speculations have taken on more-than-chymical proportions. It is no wonder, then, that the periodical itself, steadily accumulating essay upon chymical essay, had already resulted in a couple of the galenical books ridiculed in paper 124: on the 8th of January, 1712, ten months' worth of *Spectator* essays were published in two octavo volumes. Thus a correspondent to the journal on the twenty-first of February, 1712, invoking Dryden's pneumatic 'Dedication', rejoices that 'your Speculations are now swelling into Volumes, and will in all doubt pass down to future Ages' (no. 207, iii, 105).

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The bizarre result of Mr. Spectator's various manoeuvres in these examples is that both brief essay and swelling epic are praised, and mocked, and time both can and cannot be extended. In the early *Spectator* papers considered in sections (iii) and (iv) above, Addison implies that reading his periodical essays can produce a potentially supernatural compression of experience within time and that their brief physical spans are counteracted by the extent of their semantic content. However, in both cases the compression is achieved by the interpolation of various logical, and even visual, lacunae, which are not connective but disjunctive, and it is the reader who supplies the deficit with

the time of exegetical reading and the ‘bulk’ of logical conjunctions. These procedures once again recall the muse’s fanciful celerity in Hobbes’s response to Davenant, which Hobbes deconstructs as mere mnemonic trickery: the author has placed spatially or historically distant images adjacent to each other within his memory, so that the fancy can then produce them rapidly, one after the other, as though having sped across the ‘real’ span which separates them, a form of wit which reflects skill yet also, potentially, deceit or error.

Alternatively, the procedures may be understood in terms of theories of poetry such as that which Dennis derives from Milton, Hobbes and Longinus, in which virtuous ‘motion’ is transferred from poet, to text, to reader, implying that the verbal and symbolic representation of true greatness can, supernaturally, ‘fill’ the finite mind with images of divine infinity. However, such unlimited ‘play’ ultimately tips over into enthusiasm, and for all its attractions is rarely taken up unmediated by authors of the period; Addison is no exception. Either way, the narrated time and space ‘within’ the essays, stretched between the poles of the author’s and the readers’ historical realities, is revealed as utterly unstable. Holding the balance between the extremes of disingenuous witty manipulation and delusional literary enthusiasm is the irony produced by Addison’s politely even, ambiguous tone. Thus the value and coherence of the text depends less on ‘monumental design’ than on the skill of the essayist at constructing finely-balanced meanings, and on the reader’s skill at detecting them. The polite author refrains from the pedantic explanatory glossing associated with big books, and the reader unifies the fragmented parts of the swelling whole by recognizing the tacit ‘connexions’. These tensions anticipate the dynamics of the long poems discussed in Part II. However, in the years

following the *Spectator*'s first appearance further formal refinements to the rendering of greatness in verse would be introduced by an author as famous for his practice as for his critical precepts: Alexander Pope.

CHAPTER 2
PARTS AND WHOLES: READING EXTENT IN ALEXANDER POPE

Introduction

The previous chapter considered the significance of literary length, and of the relative subordination of narrative in extensive literature, in the writings of two major Whig critics of the early eighteenth century. In the first section of Chapter 1 I concentrated on Dennis's poetic theory and practice, describing the way in which he folds biblical and classical discourse into each other by drawing both on an exemplary Modern (Milton) and on epistemological theory (Hobbes) to develop a theory of poetical enthusiasm which not only privileges expansiveness but also suggests the kind of prosodic and rhetorical mechanisms that render it meaningful. Next, I examined the work of a more widely influential author, Joseph Addison, to develop the insights offered by Dennis's criticism into a broader understanding of eighteenth-century conceptions of poetic extension, but also to explore how these might help us to address the lack of overarching narrative plot in major long poems of the century.

Addison's gradual redefinition of 'greatness' as qualitative and his reading of *Paradise Lost* rely on a figurative dematerialization of text and a kind of semantic malleability which is achieved by eliding the stable spatial and temporal coordinates of narrative plot, a tactic which replicates the ironic elisions in the essays themselves. Despite this epistemological playfulness, however, Addison's orthodoxy prevails: regardless of the semantic compression made possible by literature, large numbers of 'beauties' must ultimately stem from or result in a 'bulk' of experience or knowledge from the perspectives of author and reader. Nonetheless, the excision of independent

narrated time and place, in Mr. Spectator's ironic contortions and in the reading of *Paradise Lost,* is permanent, sidelining 'story' and drawing the time and place of author and reader into close proximity within the pale of the text.

Where the case for considering Dennis and Addison may be made in terms of their importance to the development of the Whig cultural discourses which unmistakably inform *The Seasons*, *Night Thoughts* and *The Pleasures of Imagination*, the significance of Pope's writing is somewhat different. As *the* most important poet of the first half of the eighteenth century, he demands attention from anyone making an argument about mid-century poetic theory or practice. However, typically styling himself as detached from or opposed to dominant political ideologies and frequently placing himself in an adversarial relation to the modern cultural discourses associated with the Whigs, his work may seem difficult to assimilate with that of peers of rather different political complexions. It is, nonetheless, important to bear in mind the fact that 'despite a strong sense of ideological opposition, there were important crossovers between Whig and Tory rhetoric' in the 1710s, and a significant 'level of fluidity in party-political debate'.[135] Such fluidity carries over into the literary culture of the period, where it is not merely the result of competition for anti-enthusiastic rhetoric or discourses of sociability and politeness, as Abigail Williams notes, but also reflects real social and professional contacts across partisan lines.[136] This is the milieu into which Pope arrived at the start of his career and in which he first established himself as a major poet. The point is obvious but nonetheless seems worth making: even before the emergence of cross-party opposition to Walpole's ministry, Pope was not only engaging with Whig ideals of

[135] Williams, *Poetry and the Creation of a Whig Literary Culture*, p. 17.
[136] Ibid., p. 17.

politeness and sociability, but mixing and forming acquaintances with the authors who wrote about them.[137] Therefore, a consideration of Pope's poetry will simultaneously provide insights into the essentially Whig theorizations of poetic greatness discussed so far, and broaden the context of Thomson's, Young's and Akenside's writings beyond partisan boundaries.

More particularly, the present chapter examines Pope's use of the terms 'parts' and 'wholes' in relation to his engagement with large themes and extensive verse genres. This will bring into closer focus the question of how the arrangement of 'parts' within extensive, non-narrative textual 'wholes' might have been understood in the period to relate (or not) to the metaphysical arrangement of parts within the expansive forms of Creation, nature or humankind that provide their subject-matter. Surveys of three of Pope's major works will indicate the kinds of structural principles and problems the terms are related to, and will thereby suggest the nature of his legacy to later writers of extensive poetry. In what follows I look at *An Essay on Criticism* and two of his longest poems, the *Iliad* translation and *An Essay on Man*. *An Essay on Criticism* exemplifies the difficulty of pigeonholing Pope's literary-political affiliations; written early in his career, it draws so heavily on existing critical theory and expresses its ideas in such authoritative formulations that it has an air of *ancienneté* completely at odds with, say, Dennis's criticism. On the other hand, it was greeted with applause by Whigs and Tories alike, and was widely read and discussed. This reception, I suggest, may be understood in terms of its complicated representation of 'parts'. Next, consideration of the critical

[137] Thus Pope cites Addison, Young and Thomson among the positive testimonies by 'acquaintances' in 'Testimonies of Authors Concerning Our POET and his WORKS', in *Dunciad Variorum* (1729). See Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad in Four Books*, ed. by Valerie Rumbold (Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education (Longman), 1999), pp. 43-69.

apparatus surrounding Pope's *Iliad* suggests how (as translator and as critic) he facilitates and shapes readers' engagement with the primary traditional long form, the epic. This in turn will allow me to argue that the type of comprehensive structure the *Essay on Man* both describes and constitutes carries over many of the concerns of the *Iliad* paratexts into the form of the non-narrative or philosophical poem, extending the didactic epistle or essay to fit a subject that is intrinsically 'great', yet encapsulated in a physical body that is undeniably small.

(i) Parts and partiality in *An Essay on Criticism*

According to David Womersley, *An Essay on Criticism* (1711) 'was opposed to Addison's project in *The Spectator,* of reinforcing critical confidence in a general readership […] Pope's intention was to disable such unfounded confidence'.[138] On the one hand, 'the newcomer, seeking initiation into the principles of criticism and reading Pope with attention, is more likely to sense exclusion than to receive enlightenment from this clash of precepts'; on the other, ' [t]he picture of the ideal critic is also intimidating'.[139] The poem, however, is not entirely 'opposed' to the type of critical theory found in *The Spectator,* and in many respects resembles it quite closely. In 1711 Pope was still finding his feet in the world of London letters, the war of the dunces had yet to begin in earnest, and he and Addison were on good terms. Furthermore, *An Essay on Criticism* was published to widespread cross-party acclaim, and Addison responded enthusiastically, devoting a whole number of the *Spectator* to it. Addison particularly admired the way in which the poem, like Longinus's *Peri Hypsous*, 'exemplifie[s] several

[138] David Womersley, 'Introduction', in *Augustan Critical Writing*, ed. by David Womersley (London: Penguin, 1997), pp. xi-xliv (p. xxxvi).
[139] Womersley, p. xxxvi.

of his Precepts in the very Precepts themselves', a type of poetic self-reflexivity which recalls a key feature of the Whig sublime as described by Womersley in his essay, in that 'the poem becomes its own model'.[140]

Addison's response draws out the poem's affinities with Whig poetics, emphasizing the fact that the *Essay on Criticism*'s dissention from Whig celebrations of a modern, polite readership plays a relatively minor role in the work as a whole. Not only in the local echoes of sense by sound that Addison singles out but, I will argue, also in its very conception, the *Essay* displays the kind of self-reflexive posture found in Mr Spectator's essays on essays, or in Dennis's self-sustaining song in the *Te Deum*. Furthermore, just as the individual *Spectators* work as single compositions yet take on additional meaning as part of the collected body of the periodical, Pope's dazzling and challenging poem gives even the distracted reader the pleasure of perusing a series of striking, self-contained sentiments, while also offering rewards to those who seek to make sense of the work as a whole.[141] Thus, if Pope discourages the 'polite' from setting up as critics and making public their imperfect judgments, he nonetheless encourages them to read poetry, and to read it with close attention.

In the poem, 'wholes' are more than once paired and contrasted with 'parts', but where instances of the former typically refer relatively unambiguously to (for instance) the 'whole poem' or the 'whole of criticism', the sense given to 'parts' turns out to be more complicated than may at first appear. According to the *Essay*, the relation on which

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[140] *The Spectator*, no. 253, ii pp. 481-86 (p. 484). Womersley, p. xxvii.

[141] In a 'long introductory note in the 1744 edn, written apparently by Warburton', the poem is '"divided into three principal *parts* or members. The first [to v. 201] gives rules for the *Study of the Art of Criticism*: the second [from thence to v. 560.] exposes the *Causes of wrong Judgment*: and the third [from thence to the end] prescribes the *Morals of the Critic*."' (Mack, ed., 'An Essay on Criticism', *TE* I, pp. 239-326, p. 239n). Although these divisions may have been endorsed by Pope, and are certainly useful both to readers wishing to orient themselves within the poem, and to critics wishing to discuss it, I will be considering the poem in the form in which it first appeared, that is, without any clearly indicated divisions.

this dissertation focuses – that of individual parts to the whole of a poem – is undoubtedly one the critic should understand and take into account when assessing the work:

> A perfect Judge will *read* each Work of Wit
> With the same Spirit that its Author *writ*,
> Survey the *Whole*, nor seek slight Faults to find,
> Where *Nature moves*, and *Rapture warms* the Mind;
> […]
> In Wit, as Nature, what affects our Hearts
> Is not th'Exactness of peculiar Parts;
> 'Tis not a *Lip*, or *Eye*, we Beauty call,
> But the joint Force and full *Result* of *all*.
> Thus when we view some well-proportion'd Dome,
> (The *World*'s just Wonder, and ev'n *thine* O *Rome*!)
> No single Parts unequally surprize;
> All comes *united* to th'admiring Eyes;
> No monstrous Height, or Breadth, or Length appear;
> The *Whole* at once is *Bold*, and *Regular*.[142]

The primary topic here is how the critic should read, but the form of the artwork is also considered, and the ideal poem is understood as one in which dimensions are proportionate, not absolute, and individual parts are subsumed into the whole.[143] By moving from the 'body parts' simile to comparing the 'Work of Wit' to the cupola of St. Peter's, Pope shifts from critiquing a fragmented critical focus (which evokes the Renaissance blazon's view of the female body) to a positive invocation of the standard

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[142] 'An Essay on Criticism', ll. 233-52.

[143] Somewhat ironically, this familiar neoclassical notion of the harmonious literary whole echoes a formulation of it by Dennis, who appears in Pope's poem as a foolishly rule-bound sage (ll. 269-70). Dennis stated in *Advancement and Reformation* that in 'a sublime and accomplish'd poem', the reason is pleased by 'the Greatness and Justness of an Harmonious Design, whose Parts, so beautiful when they are considered separately, become transporting upon a View of the whole, while we are never weary of contemplating their exact Proportion, and beautiful Symmetry, and their secret wonderful Dependent, while they are all animated by the same Spirit, in order to the same End.' (*Critical Works*, i, 263-64). Dennis subsequently responded to *An Essay on Criticism* in terms that replicate the part/whole dichotomy in Pope's formulation: 'I will not deny but that there are two or three Passages in it with which I am not displeas'd; but what are two or three Passages to the whole? [...] But what is worse than all the rest, we find throughout the whole a deplorable want of that very Quality, which ought principally to appear in it, which is Judgement'. 'Reflections Critical and Satyrical, Upon a Late Rhapsody, Call's, An Essay Upon Criticism', in *Critical Works* i, pp. 396-97 (p. 396).

architectural analogies of design-focused neoclassical criticism.[144] Thus, unsurprisingly, close reading for local correctness is rejected in favour of a broader focus on the overall effect. 'Parts' have a merely constitutive, relative role to play, acquiring value only in the context of the whole. The precept is underwritten by Pope's own use of the word 'part' in the *Essay*, whereby its sense is constantly recast so that the reader must re-examine the word's meaning, in context, every time it appears.

Such semantic instability is typical of the poem's definitional slipperiness, resembling the changes rung on the word 'wit', which as '[r]eaders have long noticed […] is used in a confusing variety of ways' across the *Essay*.[145] For Paul Hunter, though, this is part of the poem's overall argument and works to challenge and extend traditional definitions.[146] David Morris finds similar ambiguities in the poem's deployment of 'judgement', but likewise argues that this is deliberate, and that despite its apparent lack of method the *Essay* offers a 'system' of criticism:

> *An Essay on Criticism* is, as well as a coherent theory, a test of the very critical power it recommends. We must read in the constant exercise of personal judgment – or find merely a heap of fragments.[147]

In terms of determining the poem's status as 'a system', 'a heap of fragments', or both, the wordplay on 'part' and 'parts' is as significant as the undoubted centrality of the

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[144] Mack's note to ll. 247 & ff. cites as a source or precedent a passage describing the cupola of St Peter's in Addison's *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy* (1705), once again emphasizing Pope's broad, non-partisan range of reference.

[145] J. Paul Hunter, 'Formalism and History: Binarism and the Anglophone Couplet', in *Reading for Form*, ed. by Susan J. Wolfson and Marshall Brown (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2006), pp. 129-49 (p. 136). The earlier readings to which Hunter refers include William Empson, *The Structure of Complex Words* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1951), pp. 84-100, and Mack's comments on Pope's use of the word in his 'Introduction' to the *Essay*, pp. 212-19.

[146] Hunter, p. 137.

[147] David B. Morris, 'Civilized Reading: The Act of Judgment in *An Essay on Criticism*', in *The Art of Alexander Pope*, ed. by Howard Erskine-Hill and Anne Smith (London: Vision, 1979), pp. 15-29, p. 36.

concept of 'judgement'. Pope repeatedly draws on the range of definitions available for these words to make punning connections between author, text and reader, so that not only do 'the creative and critical functions become virtually undifferentiated', as Hunter notes, but the combined effect of a poem's many formal 'parts' becomes vitally dependent on the 'parts' – in the sense of abilities – of the writer at one end of the creative process and the critic at the other.[148]

In the above passage the work of wit and the work of Nature are associated within the simile, recalling traditional analogies of 'word and world'. However, (appropriately, given the title) the first appearance of the word 'part' doesn't associate poems with the Creation, as Dennis had in *Advancement and Reformation*, but rather the Creation with the critic:

> Nature to all things fix'd the Limits fit,
> And wisely curb'd proud Man's pretending Wit:
> As on the *Land* while *here* the *Ocean* gains,
> In *other Parts* it leaves wide sandy Plains;
> Thus in the *Soul* while *Memory* prevails,
> The solid Pow'r of *Understanding* fails;
> Where Beams of warm *Imagination* play,
> The *Memory*'s soft Figures melt away.
> One *Science* only will one *Genius* fit;
> So *vast* is Art, so *narrow* Human Wit;
> Not only bounded to *peculiar Arts*,
> But oft in *those*, confin'd to *single Parts*. (52-63)

'Parts' in line 55 apparently denotes 'piece[s] or section[s] of something which together with another or others makes up the whole', that is 'portions, segments, constituents, fractions'.[149] Different sections of humanity are like the different portions of the globe, receiving different gifts from Nature. As the principle encapsulated in the simile is

[148] Hunter, p. 139.
[149] 'part', *OED*, definition I. 3.

illustrated by the examples of 'Memory', 'Understanding' and 'Imagination' within single minds, however, the focus moves from the parts of the human race to the parts of Nature's bounty that may fall to an individual. When the discourse shifts back from example to precept, the '*single Parts*' referred to are thus no longer the individuals who make up mankind but portions of individual 'Arts' that are themselves mere fractions of Nature's store of 'Wit'. As a result, the sense of 'an ability, gift, or talent' is also activated, and the double meaning threatens to reduce the sentiment to tautology, with the tenor of 'peculiar Arts' coming perilously close to that of '*single Parts*'.[150]

The semantic multivalency of 'parts' is deployed again a few lines on, but this time the 'sections' are those of the text and the 'abilities' belong to the author rather than the critic. As Virgil carefully compares Homer's poetry to 'Nature', 'when t'examine ev'ry Part he came,/ *Nature* and *Homer* were, he found, the *same*' (134-38). Here Homer's abilities *and* the different parts of his poetry are the same as those of Nature, a version of the creation/text analogy that fuses creative forces and created bodies. Similarly, when the narrator complains that

> [m]ost Criticks, fond of some subservient Art,
> Still make the *Whole* depend upon a *Part*,
> They talk of *Principles*, but Notions prize,
> And All to one lov'd Folly Sacrifice (263-66)

two senses coexist within the single usage. The apparent meaning of the first couplet is that, in contrast to the 'perfect Judge' who 'surveys the Whole' (233), foolish critics make 'the *Whole* depend upon a Part' of a poem, basing their assessment on individual lines or passages when they should consider the total work. The sense of 'Part' is,

[150] *OED*, definition II. 15.

however, modified by the following couplet to mean the particular ability or concern of the critic, a shift which both requires us to read 'the whole' and, simultaneously, enacts the biased critic's distortion of his object of study by his own preferences or abilities, reducing the whole art of criticism to a single 'subservient Art'. In the lines that follow, this 'Byass' (203) leads the poet away from the expression of critical precepts to a consideration of the effects of 'a *Love to Parts*' (288), that is, 'partiality' in critics, a pride in personal aptitude or skill or station that leads to undue focus on 'parts' in the sense of specific qualities or aspects of poetry, as well as to unsound critical predilections which replicate the 'rage of party' in the field of literature.

A catalogue of such partialities follows, keyed (as earlier in lines 26 to 45) to the anaphoric designation of 'parts' of the population of critics as 'Some', 'Others' or 'Most', which allows Pope to demonstrate that he himself is not partial but rather a man of parts, as he displays his unbiased, witty insights into *all* the parts of criticism.[151] Thus critiques of different biases are combined with catchy formulations of the key principles for judging '*Conceit*', '*Language*', '*Numbers*', and so on. By dovetailing two senses of 'parts' (the sections of the poem and the abilities or preferences of the critic) in the catalogue of 'partialities', Pope indicates tacitly as well as overtly that in the modern public sphere, where every common reader fancies himself a critic, a work's coherence threatens to become merely a function of the individual reading mind. It may be, as Womersley suggests, that such coherence is not just elusive but deliberately made unavailable in order to intimidate polite readers of the middling sort. However, if Pope was typically as unwilling to flatter the 'Vulgar' as to defer to court rulers and officials,

[151] 'An Essay on Criticism', ll. 289, 305, 337, 394, 408, 430, 452.

he nonetheless relied on a relatively wide readership for his income, and his published works accommodate the amateur as well as the connoisseur.

The poem is, furthermore, overtly didactic in tone, and it is important to keep in view the instructive function that poetry and criticism hold for Pope, even if part of his lesson was the desirability of Socratic modesty. In *An Essay on Criticism*, 'Homer' is made a touchstone for readers, a capacious poetic analogue of 'Nature'. With such an author, the role of the critic is not to point out errors but to clear away misunderstanding and encourage appropriate appreciation. Like '*Dionysius* [of Halicarnassus]', the ideal critic will '*Homer*'s Thoughts refine,/ And call new Beauties forth from ev'ry Line!'[152] Conversely, the refinement and dissemination of Homer's beauties is beneficial precisely because his works are the 'Nature' of poetry, a synecdochic, textual equivalent of the knowledge communicated to mankind by the evidence of the Creation, albeit from the limited perspective of early Greek culture. In Pope's *Translation of Homer's Iliad* (1715-20), a monumental endeavour which made both his fortune and his reputation, Addisonian 'refinement' and 'beauties' take on a more substantial role in the appreciation of Homer, supplying critical foci that confer legibility on the extensive work of translation and criticism.[153]

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[152] Ibid., ll. 665-6. Given the chronology, these beauties are presumably related to those invoked by Dryden and others rather than to the more modern, popular ones that Addison later 'calls forth' from *Paradise Lost*, but the lines nonetheless emphasise the near-contiguity of the apparently polarized partisan critical discourses of the period.

[153] Maynard Mack provides an account of the genesis and reception of the work in his introduction to the Twickenham edition; see also Joseph Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991), pp. 181 – 217. A careful assessment of the financial details of the *Iliad* translation is given in David Foxon, *Pope and the Early Eighteenth-Century Book Trade*, ed. by James McLaverty (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), pp. 51-63.

(ii) The apparatus of Pope's *Iliad*

The scholarly apparatus surrounding the translated verse is particularly suggestive of the type of reading experience Pope wished to produce, and of the difficulties of comprehension or appreciation he expected readers would encounter when faced with a poem characterized not only by historical remoteness but also by narrative complexity (the famous convention of starting *in medias res*), repetitiveness (epithets and catalogues) and long-windedness (elaborate speeches and epic similes). Equally, notwithstanding its inauguration of a new phase in the battle of the books,[154] the translation's apparatus also allows us to view Pope playing a less oppositional role within contemporary cultural debates than those which he often adopted. As Claudia Thomas notes, in it

> Pope addressed an expanded reading public, including not only aristocrats and literate gentry but prosperous merchants, professionals, and women. This was the generation of readers primed by *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* to seek entertainment both refined and refining.[155]

In what follows, it will be shown that both he and his assistant Thomas Parnell aimed to 'reconcile' the need for accessibility with that for scholarship by adopting the polite, conversational stance of periodical literary criticism along with the representation of the epic poem as a collection of beauties.

In a 1708 letter to Pope, Sir William Trumbull had praised the young poet's translations of excerpts from Homer and encouraged him to 'English' the rest:

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[154] See Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age*, pp. 218-244.
[155] Claudia N. Thomas, *Alexander Pope and His Eighteenth-Century Women Readers* (Carbondale; Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1994), p. 26.

> I am confirmed in my former application to you, and give me leave to renew it upon this occasion, and that you wou'd proceed in translating that incomparable Poet, to make him speak good *English*, to dress his admirable characters in your proper, significant, and expressive conceptions, and to make his works as useful and instructive to this degenerate age, as he was to our friend *Horace* at *Præneste*.[156]

The allusion is to the opening lines of *Epistle* I.2, where Horace writes that 'I have been reading again the tale of the Trojan war./ The poet shows what is fine, what is foul, what is advisable/ and what is not',[157] and then proceeds to 'call forth' the wisdom of the poem. This, in a sense, is what Pope eventually undertook to do, translating not only the verse itself but attempting to reformulate the type of 'instruction' Horace had found in the *Iliad* for a modern audience.[158]

For such a project, the 'dress' in which the work appeared to the world was as important as that given to the characters. As has long been recognized, Pope was intensely interested in, and paid great attention to, the physical, printed embodiment of his own work in books, and his *Iliad*, first published by subscription in six lavishly produced quarto volumes, reflects this.[159] Red lettering, illuminated capitals, full-page engravings of antiquarian relics, and numerous pictorial headpieces adorn the text.[160] The quality of these decorations recalls those of other high-end translations – such as

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[156] Sir William Trumbull to Pope, 9 April 1708, in Alexander Pope, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. by George Sherburn, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), i, 45-6.
[157] Horace, 'Epistles', I.ii, ll. 2-4.
[158] On Pope's complex relation to the martial cultural codes of classical epic, which was marked both by his early enthusiasm for Homer and by his lack of the formal schooling that naturalized Ancient literature for Britain's masculine elite, see Carolyn D. Williams, *Pope, Homer & Manliness: Some Aspects of Eighteenth-Century Classical Learning* (London: Routledge, 1993), passim.
[159] The subscriber's edition, elaborately decorated, and a much plainer non-subscription folio edition appeared simultaneously. For a vivid statement of Pope's interest in the design and printing of his works, see James McLaverty, *Pope, Print and Meaning* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), pp. 1-13.
[160] For Pope's primary role in the design of the edition, and the degree of innovation and imitation in the different elements, see Foxon, pp. 63-86. Nonetheless, in considering the visual dimensions of eighteenth-century publications it is important also to take into account the influence of the bookseller, in this case Bernard Lintott; he was, for example, known for his frequent use of rubrication (as in 'Lintot's rubric post', *The Dunciad in Four Books*, I, l. 40).

John Ogilby's *Homer his Iliads* and Dryden's *Works of Virgil* – and thereby advertise, even before they are read, their status as elite cultural artefacts.[161] Similarly, the inclusion in such earlier works of prefaces, biographies and commentaries as supplements to the main text is adopted by Pope to underpin and illuminate the translation itself. However, arming himself against potential criticisms by scholarly readers yet also aiming to satisfy the wider audience at whom the folio was marketed, Pope deploys these paratextual borrowings in new ways, adjusting them to suit his own translation's particular context and audience. This is perhaps most clearly visible in the 'Preface', written by Pope himself, and in the 'Essay on the Life, Writings and Learning of Homer', composed by Thomas Parnell.

For Herbert Tucker, the bifurcation of prefatory apparatus into the 'Preface' and the 'Essay' plays out the debate of the Ancients and the Moderns. He characterizes the former as 'a Longinian encomium on Homer's unmatchable fire of invention' and the latter as pure historiographical, textual analysis. Thus, he argues, 'the cloven apparatus to Pope's *Iliad* – one part warmly engaged appreciation, one part cool scholarly background – reflected neatly a larger, unresolved Augustan contest between modern and ancient perspectives on literary value'.[162] The characterization of the two texts is broadly accurate, but the depiction of Pope's and Parnell's contributions as cleaving respectively to the cause of the Ancients and the Moderns is less convincing. Firstly, Parnell, a Scriblerian who also contributed to the *Spectator*, was hardly the type of a Modern. As

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[161] John Ogilby, *Homer his Iliads Translated, Adorn'd with Sculpture, and Illustrated with Annotations...* (1669) and John Dryden, *The Works of Virgil: containing his Pastorals, Georgics, and Æeneis. Translated into English verse* (1667). The former was the translation through which Pope first encountered the *Iliad* as a child and the latter 'was particularly important for the young Pope and a chief inspiration for his Homer' (Levine, *The Battle of the Books*, p. 185).

[162] Herbert Tucker, *Epic: Britain's Heroic Muse, 1790-1910* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), p. 32.

Thomas Woodman notes, he, like Pope, Swift, Prior and Gay, was inclined by '[t]he traditional elite education [he had] received […] to the ancients' party in literature and learning', and 'delight[ed] to attack modern presumptions.'[163] Thus his 'Remarks of Zoilus upon Homer's Battel of the Frogs and Mice' and 'Life of Zoilus' implicitly present this ancient critic's philological and critical quibbling and rejection of Homer and Aristotle as a type for equally disreputable Modern practice.[164] Secondly, Tucker fails to take into account the collaborative working methods of Pope and his *Iliad* assistants, which make it hard to separate authorship and critical approaches between different elements of the apparatus.[165] Thus, for instance, Pope insisted on his debt to Parnell and praised his 'Essay',[166] yet also claimed to Spence that he had had to revise it extensively to reduce its 'stiff' manner, so that 'I think verily it cost me more pain in the correcting than the writing of it would have done'.[167] This evidence, it seems to me, suggests that the two prefatory texts were intended to give similar, or at least complementary, perspectives on the poem they discussed.

Tucker's summary also overlooks a major and highly influential precedent for both of the kinds of criticism which Pope and Parnell undertake, namely Addison's contributions to *The Spectator*, which mingled advocacy for politeness and gentlemanly conversation with remarks on the sublime pleasures of Homer, Virgil, and *Paradise Lost*.

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[163] Woodman, *Politeness and Poetry in the Age of Pope*, p. 44.
[164] Thomas Parnell, 'The Life of Zoilus', 'Preface to Zoilus's Remarks' and 'The Remarks of Zoilus', in *Collected Poems of Thomas Parnell*, ed. by Claude Rawson and F. P. Lock (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1989), pp. 71-83, 97-108. See also the commentary to this edition, pp. 444-45.
[165] Briefly, Pope commissioned, directed and revised the research and writing of his team, including Parnell (see Mack, 'Introduction', p. lxxxii), and in turn incorporated the results of that research into his own contributions (pp. lxxx-lxxxi).
[166] Pope to Parnell, 25 May or 1 June 1714, *Correspondence*, i, p. 225 and Gay, Jervas, Arbuthnot, and Pope to Parnell, February 1715/16, *Correspondence*, i, p. 333.
[167] Pope, February-March 1735, in Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men, Collected from Conversation*, ed. by James M. Osborn, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), vol. i, p. 84.

Excessive scholarly minuteness was firmly rejected in eighteenth-century discourses of politeness, and Addison's periodical essays repeatedly mock pedantry. However, as Lawrence Klein has shown, politeness nonetheless 'assumed a role in the classification of knowledge […] and "polite" could be used to distinguish between a "polite" approach to literature as opposed to mere philological criticism'.[168] In the process, polite appreciation expressed in conversational modes replaces learned analysis and abstruse jargon. Both Pope and Parnell draw on this Addisonian critical discourse in order to combine the apparently divergent methods of Ancient and Modern criticism within the single, albeit articulated, body of text.

The preface, which does indeed open with a Longinian celebration of Homer's 'fire and rapture', also deploys a less violent metaphor for the poem's qualities. Pope compares the *Iliad* to a

> wild Paradise, where if we cannot see all the Beauties so distinctly as in an order'd Garden, it is only because the Number of them is infinitely Greater. 'Tis like a copious Nursery which contains the Seeds and first Productions of every kind[169]

As Steven Shankman points out in *Homer in the Age of Passion*, the above passage from the *Iliad* preface closely echoes Addison's account of Old Testament poetry in *Spectator* number 160, where the poet's genius is compared to 'a rich Soil in a happy Climate, that produces a whole Wilderness of noble Plants rising in a thousand beautiful Landskips'.[170] Pope's simile also evokes Milton's description of Eden, and the term 'beauties' recalls

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[168] Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness*, p. 5.
[169] 'Preface', *The Iliad*, *TE*, VII, p. 3.
[170] Steven Shankman, *Pope's Iliad: Homer in the Age of Passion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1983), p. 108. Rebecca Ferguson notes another Addisonian borrowing in the 'Preface': the distinction between Homeric 'invention' and Virgilian 'judgment', which overtly echoes *Spectator* no. 279 (Rebecca Ferguson, *The Unbalanced Mind: Pope and the Rule of Passion* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1986), p. 34).

those which fill the *Spectator* essays on *Paradise Lost*. The word recurs later in the preface, after an assessment of the poem according to standard neoclassical categories, when Pope retrospectively reconfigures the procedure as an Addisonian survey; '[h]aving now spoken of the Beauties and Defects of the Original, it remains to treat of the Translation' (17).

The significance of the emphasis on the abundant variety of the poem, and of the references to beauties, becomes clear in the commentary.[171] Here Pope explicitly styles himself a collector and disseminator of beauties, a role which offers him both a means of distinguishing himself from the pedantry of modern criticism and of avoiding the didactic-interpretative or exegetical explicitness which might limit his readership. His commentary on Book I starts by remarking that

> [i]t is something strange that of all the Commentators upon *Homer*, there is hardly one whose principal Design is to illustrate the Poetical Beauties of the Author. They are Voluminous in explaining those Sciences which he made but subservient to his Poetry, and sparing only upon that Art which constitutes his character [...] The grand Ambition of one sort of Scholars is to encrease the Number of *Various Lections* […] The prevailing Passion of others is to discover *New Meanings* in an Author'[172]

The contrast between beauties and lections or meanings echoes the lament in Addison's *Dialogues upon the Usefulness of Medals* that 'there is nothing more ridiculous than an antiquary's reading the Greek and Latin poets. He never thinks of the beauty of a passage, but is for searching into what he calls the erudition of the author'; by making his terms plural, Pope also evokes the *Spectator* essays on Milton.[173] False inflation of

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[171] 'However much [Pope] may have been assisted in gathering the information, this body of commentary is a reflection of his own mind and art.' Maynard Mack, 'Introduction', *TE*, VII, p. clxiv.
[172] 'The Iliad', p. 82.
[173] Joseph Addison, *Dialogue upon the Usefulness of Ancient Medals, Especially in relation to the Latin and Greek Poets (1726)* (New York & London: Garland, 1976), pp. 31-2.

learning through a spurious multiplication of readings and meanings is thus contrasted with the true critic's transmission of authentic poetic value.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this critique of philological pedantry is the fact that it is embedded in a work that displays many of the hallmarks of textual and historical scholarship, which Pope would later parody in *The Dunciad Variorum*. Much of the commentary remains within the conventions of earlier criticism and translations. In it Pope (drawing on the research of Parnell and others) highlights grammatical ambiguities, notes Greek words or phrases which have no English equivalent and therefore necessitated non-literal translation, or discusses the rationale for a given rendering in his text with reference to those of previous translators. Often he simply paraphrases earlier authorities, most commonly Eustathius and Anne Dacier.[174] The difference between Pope's methods and those of pedantry is rather that between ends and means, since he explicitly subordinates historical and textual analysis to the project of discovering beauties, which are not merely aesthetically pleasing but incorporate aspects of the moral or philosophical *sententia*. David Alvarez remarks that 'the modern focus on minutiae' and 'the very form of modern scholarship – with its footnotes, indexes, appendices, and other apparatuses – blocked the easy transmission of the useful political lessons preserved in classical literature'.[175] However, the transmission of 'atomized' pleasure or knowledge was perfectly in tune with such a form. In the 'Observations', footnotes or endnotes keyed to individual lines or passages interrupt the reading process and parse the

[174] 'The model for Pope's notes, or observations, as they were called in the first editions, was the *Remarques* of Anne Dacier […] Pope's other main source of commentary was the πάρεκβολάί of Eustathius, "the greatest among the scholars of the twelfth century"' (Mack, 'Introduction, in *TE*, VII, p. cv).

[175] David Alvarez, "Poetical cash': Joseph Addison, antiquarianism, and aesthetic value', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38:3 (2005), 509-31, p. 511.

poem into discrete, potentially self-sufficient pieces which can then be presented as a plethora of beauties. The redefinition of the critic's task in the first note to Book I away from 'finding out different Significations in one thing' towards the 'discovery' of beauties thus allows Pope to employ the forms and even the content of Modern scholarship while offering an 'Ancient' reading of the *Iliad* which repackages its aesthetic perfection and moral wisdom into manageable and pleasurable pieces.

The same blurring of Ancient and Modern may be seen in Parnell's 'Essay on the Life, Writings and Learning of Homer', in which his tone veers, like Pope's, towards the appreciative. In choosing to call the composition an 'essay' either he or Pope (it's not clear whose decision it was) is indicating that the approach to this scholarly minefield is to be non-programmatic and elegant rather than pedantic or contentious. Discussing the historical sources for the facts of Homer's life, the material remains are assessed with Modern scrupulousness but then rejected in favour of the evidence of the multiple beautiful landskips (to use Addison's phrase) of the poem itself:

> At his Birth he appears not to have been *blind*, whatever he might be afterwards. The *Chian* Medal of him (which is of great Antiquity, according to *Leo Allatius*) seats him with a Volume open, and reading intently: But there is no need of Proofs from Antiquity for that which every Line of his Works will demonstrate. With what an Exactness, agreeable to the natural Appearance of Things, do his Cities stand, his Mountains rise, his Rivers wind, and his Regions lie extended? How beautifully are the Views of all things drawn in their Figures, and adorn'd with their Paintings?[176]

These rapturous rhetorical questions are hardly 'cool'.

Again, like Pope, Parnell has recourse to Addison's spectatorial discourse; for example, his justification for detailing the 'Life, Writings and Learning of Homer' has a

[176] 'An Essay on the Life, Writings, and Learning of Homer', in *TE*, VII, p. 46.

distinctly Addisonian ring to it: 'There is something in the Mind of Man, which goes beyond bare Curiosity, and even carries us on to a Shadow of Friendship, with those great Genius's whom we have known to excel in former Ages', a 'Disposition' which is 'compounded' of various traits including 'a Tendency to be farther acquainted with them, by gathering every Circumstance of their Lives'.[177] We are reminded here of Addison's playful introduction of Mr. Spectator in the very first number, where he posits the reader's desire for knowledge of the author.[178] The notion of a personal acquaintance between the poet and his readers helps to soften the learned, historicist perspective of the essay as a whole with a sense of immediacy, recalling the balance envisaged in Parnell's poem 'To Mr. Pope', where he seeks

> To praise, yet still with due Respect to praise,
> A Bard triumphant in immortal Bays,
> The Learn'd to show, the Sensible commend,
> Yet still preserve the Province of the Friend[179]

In order to achieve this precarious equilibrium, Parnell redefines his textual archaeology as a 'Conversation' with the deceased poet:

> [P]erhaps his Works, which would not furnish us with Facts for his Life, will be more reasonably made use of to give us a Picture of his Mind: To this end therefore, we may

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[177] *TE*, VII, p. 26.

[178] 'I have observed, that a Reader seldom peruses a Book with Pleasure 'till he knows whether the Writer of it be a black or a fair Man, of a mild or cholerick Disposition, Married or a Batchelor, with other Particulars of the like nature, that conduce very much to the right Understanding of an Author.' (*Spectator* no. 1, i, p. 1)

[179] Thomas Parnell, 'To Mr. *Pope*.', in *Collected Poems of Thomas Parnell*, ed. by Claude Rawson and F. P. Lock (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1989), pp. 119-21, ll. 1-4. These lines are quoted by Hester Jones in her argument for Pope's interest in the role of friendship in the relations between Homeric characters, Hester Jones, 'Pope's Homer: The Shadow of Friendship', in *Alexander Pope, World and Word*, ed. by Howard Erskine-Hill (Oxford: OUP for the British Academy, 1998), pp. 55-68.

> suffer the very Name and Notion of a Book to vanish for a while, and look upon what is left us as a Conversation, in order to gain an Acquaintance with *Homer*[180]

The physical text is dematerialized, and the evidence of the new learning dismissed, in order to facilitate a more immediate and more polite (albeit imaginary) form of communication. There is, then, nothing particularly 'neat' about the division of labour or viewpoint in *Homer's Iliad*. By adopting aspects of Addison's method in his periodical criticism, the textual apparatus as a whole transcends the battle of the books and transforms enthusiastic encomium into a conveniently commoditized catalogue of beauties, and dry scholarship into sociable (instead of 'mere') curiosity. We are asked to enjoy not the fragments of Homeric artefacts that remain, but rather the pieces of the poem as delivered to us in Pope's translation, its mountains, rivers and regions.

(iii) Story and rhapsody

Thus, as Levine argues, Pope and Parnell 'were trying to walk the ground between the moderns, who could not see [the *Iliad*'s] beauties, and the ancients, who were not satisfied with them alone.'[181] They took similar routes in order to achieve this balance, and the 'Modern' historical consciousness displayed in Parnell's 'Life' doesn't so much contradict an 'Ancient perspective' as supplement it. Levine writes that 'while the ancients might deplore modern scholarship's "excesses" and its pedantry, and worry about its dangerous and distracting consequences, even they were being forced by it to alter their perceptions of the ancient past, or at least to align them more carefully with the

[180] *TE*, VII, p. 50.
[181] Ibid., p. 205.

evidence'.[182] This evidence included new detailed assessments of extant manuscript sources for the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* which threatened to undermine the cause of the ancients.[183] Their arguments for the poems' moral and aesthetic value were vitally dependent on the deliberate coherence and design of the works, but new scholarship instead posited a disparate body of texts, which might merely be the transcriptions of miscellaneous oral compositions by multiple prehistoric bards.[184]

In charting the 'second life' of Homer, that of his works, Parnell addresses this contentious issue by formulating a narrative which takes into account modern evidence and theory but nonetheless asserts Homer as the single source. Their genesis unknown, we are told that '[a]t [the works'] first Appearance in *Greece*, they were not reduc'd into a regular Body, but remain'd as they were brought over in several separate Pieces […] Nor were these entitled *Books*, but *Rhapsodies*; from whence they who sung them had the Title of *Rhapsodists*. It was in this manner they began to be disperst.'[185] The fragmentariness asserted by modern scholars is thus rewritten as the result of poor archival practice: 'while [Homer's] Works were suffer'd to lie in a distracted manner, the Chain of Story was not always perceiv'd, so that they lost much of their Force and Beauty by being read disorderly' (58). Later heirs have had to counteract this dispersal by 'digesting' the text 'into order'; the Athenian tyrant Pisistratus first put together 'the confus'd Parts of *Homer* […h]e divided them into the two different Works, entitled the *Iliad* and *Odysses*; he digested each according to the Author's design, to make their Plans become evident; and distinguish'd each again into twenty four Books' (ibid.). Thus,

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[182] Levine, p. 148.
[183] Ibid., p. 150.
[184] D'Aubignac, Perrault, and Bentley all endorse versions of this theory.
[185] *TE*, VII, p. 57.

Parnell's account divides Homer's literary existence into three different phases: in the first, obscured by the mists of time, the epics are born whole; in the second, inaugurated by the fall into historical record, the collection of poetic fragments circulates extensively, acquiring canonicity but weakened by the lack of 'the chain of story'; in the last, the irregular parts are 're-collected' into coherent narrative, which may or may not represent a return to the original order.[186]

Strikingly, Pisistratus's work is described as a kind of revelation. Like Newton unveiling the order of the solar system heretofore hidden from postlapsarian human understanding,

> *Athens* […] claims its proper Honour of rescuing the Father of Learning from the Injuries of Time, of having restor'd *Homer* to himself, and given the World a view of him in his Perfection. So that if his Verses were before admir'd for their *Use* and *Beauty*, as the *Stars* were before they were consider'd scientifically as a system; they are now admir'd much more for their graceful *Harmony*, and the *Sphere* of *Order* in which they appear to move.[187]

The newly discovered 'Order' increases the value of the text: '[t]hey became thenceforward more the Pleasure of the Wits of *Greece*; more the Subject of their Studies, and the Employment of Pens' (ibid.). This progression from textual fragmentation to textual retrieval provides us with a compelling metaphor for Pope's translation and its material incarnation. The edition as cultural reliquary replicates the exemplary work of Pisistratus, mitigating the Moderns' obscuring and fragmentation of Homer by reconfiguring the philological fragments into a polite or sociable text, increasing its cultural (and material) value. Equally, the oral origins asserted by Perrault

[186] Parnell goes on to describe how this process repeats itself throughout the pre-Christian phase of the epics' history.
[187] *TE*, VII, p. 59.

and his ilk are reframed as a figurative quality of the poem ('gracefully Harmonious'), just as the solar system revealed by Newton reconfigured the literal 'music of the spheres' in the old Ptolemaic system into a metaphorical, structural equivalent: visually apprehensible patterns of ordered motion. Rhapsody, in other words, has become story.

In effect, the 'Preface' and the 'Essay' together re-direct critical enquiry into the *Iliad* away from the polarities of earlier debates over the poem's value. The rhetoric of the Longinian sublime and the discourses of politeness and conversation provide Pope and Parnell with a way of integrating admiration and analysis. However, a corollary of this re-orientation of critical focus is an intensified interest in the poem's structural coherence and the ways in which it might be read. Parnell's recursive narrative of fragmentation followed by re-collection, and his distinction between rhapsody and story, suggest a concern with the formal qualities of the poem and describe, in the guise of a historical account, two different aspects of the poem brought out by the different philological methodologies. Similarly, Pope's preface and notes emphasize the way in which the poem combines these two formal extremes within the single work, depicting Homer as a 'poet who can discipline his treatments of action of character to each particular moment, without ever losing sight of his "grand design"', '[maintaining] the twofold consistency of experience' so that the epic displays 'extension on the one hand, coherence and consistency on the other'.[188]

Evidence for how Pope understands this combination of part and whole may be gleaned from his handling of Homer's epic similes. In the early eighteenth century the extensive similes of classical poetry were typically seen as problematic; Samuel Garth, for instance, is quick to praise Ovid's uncharacteristic restraint in his 'similitudes', which

[188] Mack, 'Introduction', p. clxix.

contrasts with the practice of other ancient authors.[189] However, Pope explains Homer's extravagant similes as the result of his characteristic 'Invention':

> It is owing to the same vast Invention that his *Similes* have been thought too exuberant and full of Circumstances. The Force of this Faculty is seen in nothing more, than in its Inability to confine itself to that single Circumstance upon which the Comparison is grounded: It runs out into Embellishments of additional Images, which however are so managed as not to overpower the main one. His Similes are like Pictures, where the principal Figure has not only its proportion given agreeable to the Original, but is also set off with occasional Ornaments and Prospects.[190]

In other words, the source of the epic simile is the same as that of the plot, being equally the result of Homer's exceptionally fruitful imagination. His belief that the similes share the same source as the overall 'Fable' leads Pope to consistently assert the close relation between the two. Rather than being *merely* 'Embellishments' or 'Ornaments', Pope points out their function in developing the various characters and events. Almost every simile is provided with an explication in the notes; one of the more ingenious is that given for the extended simile in Book IV which compares the Greeks advancing into battle to waves crashing against the shore:

> Dire was the Clang, and dreadful from afar,
> Of arm'd *Tydides* rushing to the War.
> As when the Winds, ascending by degrees,
> First move the whitening Surface of the Seas,
> The Billows float in order to the Shore,
> The Wave behind rolls on the Wave before;
> Till, with the growing Storm, the Deeps arise,
> Foam o'er the Rocks, and thunder to the Skies.
> So to the Fight the thick *Battalions* throng,
> Shields urg'd on Shields, and Men drove Men along. (IV, 476-485)

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[189] Samuel Garth, 'Preface', in Garth, ed., *Ovid's Metamorphoses in Fifteen Books. Translated by the most Eminent Hands* (1717), p vi.
[190] *TE*, VII, p. 13.

The translation itself expresses Pope's sense that the simile is integral to the action. Parallel recursions ('Wave behind rolls on the Wave before', 'Shields urg'd on Shields', 'Men drove Men') knit vehicle and tenor, and this coherence is underscored by the linear arrangement of the simile, with the description of the tempest enclosed by two couplets describing the Greeks. In the note Pope confutes Anne Dacier's criticism, that not all the details of the comparison fit the scene being described, by attentively unpacking the simile:

> The Passage naturally bears this Sense. *As when, upon the rising of the Wind, the Waves roll after one another to the Shore; at first there is a distant Motion in the Sea, then they approach to break with Noise on the Strand, and lastly rise swelling over the Rocks, and toss their Foam above their Heads: So the* Greeks, *at first, marched in order one after another silently to the Fight*—Where the Poet breaks off from prosecuting the Comparison, and by a *Prolepsis*, leaves the Reader to carry it on; and image to himself the future Tumult, Rage, and Force of the Battel, in Opposition to that Silence in which he describes the Troops at present, in the Lines immediately ensuing.[191]

In effect, the simile provides us with details of the scene and events which are left out of the literal description. This is a departure from standard defences of epic simile. Boileau, an important source for Pope, writes in his 'Critical Reflections on Longinus' that

> Comparisons in Odes and Epic Poems are not introduced only to illustrate and embellish the Discourse, but to amuse and relax the Mind of the Reader, by frequently disengaging him from too painful an Attention to the Principal Subject, and by leading him into other agreeable Images. *Homer* excelled in this Particular, whose Comparisons abound with such Images of Nature as are proper to relieve and diversifie his Subjects.[192]

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[191] *TE*, VII, p. 243.
[192] Nicolas Boileau-Despreaux, *The Works of Monsieur Boileau. Made English from the Last Paris Edition, by Several Hands*, 2 vols (1712) in *ECCO* [accessed April 2012], ii, p. 110.

For Pope, however, rather than always or necessarily 'relaxing' or 'disengaging' the reader, Homer's similes can also heighten the affective and imaginative responses of the reader. In the wave simile, he argues, this is achieved not only by the prolepsis that requires readers to actively compare vehicle and tenor and 'imagine to himself', but also by the orchestration of emotional responses across the successive elements: 'The foregoing Simile of the Winds, rising by degrees into a general Tempest, is an Image of the progress of his own Spirit in this Description. We see first an innumerable Army moving in order, and are amus'd with the Pomp and Silence, then waken'd with the Noise and Clamour; next they join, the adverse Gods are let down among them […] at different Openings we behold the distinct Deaths of several Heroes, and then are involv'd again in the same Confusion'.[193]

As indicated in Chapter one, Addison has long been understood to show particular interest in the act of reading; Pope's accounts of and interest in the reading process have typically attracted less notice from scholars. However, the emphasis here on readers' contributions to the poem's sense (by completing the comparison) and on their responses (visualizing the scene, being amused, wakened, or involved in confusion), shows how important reading (rather than the more public, evaluative activity of 'criticism'), as both experience and activity, is to Pope. It also suggests the type of readerly autonomy and engagement he expects his edition to permit. The duality of simile, its simultaneous existence as an independent beauty and as a description of the action, expands the range of meanings and experiences available to the reader.

A similar impression of multiple potential readings emerges in Pope's contributions to the apparatus. As discussed above, the depiction of epic as a collection

[193] *TE*, VII, p. 243.

of beauties is hinted at in the preface's garden metaphor and becomes explicit in the opening note. A selection of 'very laborious and uncommon sorts of Indexes' at the end of the poem add to this view, facilitating the interpretation of the poem as a collection of beauties rather than as a monumental poem.[194] The first, more conventional index gives line references for 'Persons and Things', while the second lists the poem's 'fables' (including the main 'moral', the various episodes, allegorical fables, and 'marvellous' fictions), the main 'characters', a table of the 'most considerable' 'Speeches or Orations', as well as providing separate headings for 'Descriptions or Images' (subtitled 'A Collection of the most remarkable throughout the Poem'), for 'Similes' and for 'Versification' ('*Expressing in the Sound the Thing describ'd*').[195] Lastly, a third index, 'of Arts and Sciences', lists passages that reflect Homer's learning on a range of topics, from 'Art Military' to 'Theology'.[196] In effect, the indeces allows the reader to identify passages of particular interest, and to use the epic as a collection of exemplary versification, of poetic beauties, of moral fables, of curious characters, or of scientific information. The *Iliad*, in other words, is made to fit the demands of the new learning, and turned encyclopaedic.

However, Pope's 'observations' or notes, despite their dispersal of the commentary, can equally be seen to collectively develop critical arguments. As Mack points out, one of these is an insistence on 'Homer's firmness of design'.[197] Thus, Pope's note to book six, line 542 comments that '[s]ince there was a Necessity that this Hero

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[194] Pope to Robert Digby, 1 May 1720, *Correspondence*, II, p. 43. Pope writes that he had hoped to provide four 'uncommon' indices, but was unable to complete the full set due to time constraints. His description most clearly fits the last two of the three provided in the published text.
[195] 'An Index of Persons and Things', in *TE*, VIII, pp. 580-590; 'A Poetical Index to Homer's *Iliad*', in *TE*, VIII, pp. 591-608.
[196] Ibid., pp. 609-616.
[197] Similarly, Ferguson argues that the notes display a 'dominant interest in scenes of pathos and scenes of intense passion', Ferguson, *The Unbalanced Mind*, p. 35.

should be absent from the Action during a great Part of the Iliad, the Poet has shewn his Art in nothing more, than the Methods he takes from time to time to keep up our great Idea of him'.[198]

Furthermore, as though to counteract the entropic tendency of the vast variety of the poem and the fractured foci of the prefaces, observations and indices, the edition also includes apparatuses which help to order the poem and to fix it in a pattern that the reader can comprehend, revealing the 'Chain of Story'. Each book of the poem is provided with a prefatory 'Argument' which not only summarizes the events it narrates but concludes by specifying the place(s) of action and the time which it covers. Thus the 'Argument' of the first book notes that

> *[t]he* Time *of two and twenty Days is taken up in this Book; nine during the Plague, one in the Council and Quarrel of the Princes, and twelve for* Jupiter*'s Stay with the* Æthiopians*, at whose Return* Thetis *prefers her Petitions. The Scene lies in the* Grecian *Camp, then changes to* Chrysa*, and lastly to the Gods on* Olympus.[199]

These introductory summaries effectively hypostatize the 'digestion' attributed to Pisistratus by Parnell into a separate body of text, and methodically plot the narrative along the axes of narrated time and space so as to reveal the connections that bind Homer's rhapsodic beauties into the chain of story. A map of the Greek peninsula and a 'Geographical Table *of the Towns,* &c. *in* Homer's *Catalogue of* Greece*, with the Authorities for their Situation, as placed in this Map*', along with an illustration of the

[198] See Mack, 'Introduction', *TE*, VII, p. clx.
[199] *TE*, VII, p. 81.

plain of Troy and an 'Essay on Homer's Battels', help the reader to visualize the action in two dimensions and so to imagine the unfolding events for themselves.[200]

The coexistence in the *Iliad*'s apparatus of these two divergent perspectives, of the mass of beauties and the ingeniously coherent poem, is not only a useful way of extending the edition's appeal to readers. It is also characteristic of Pope's poetry in general, where the local and the individual typically exist in dynamic tension with the universal. As such, this reworking of 'Ancient' Homeric wisdom into a form that re-inscribes narrative and artistic coherence yet also accommodates the 'partial' or 'disorderly' reader allows us to understand the more complete fusion of fragmentation and coherence in the later essay poems as a means of simultaneously admitting and correcting the cultural and moral realities Pope frequently deplores. In what follows, a survey of how 'parts' and 'wholes' relate within the *Essay on Man* will suggest how the epic scale of Homer's poetry and the editorial innovations of the *Iliad* translation transfer to his longest non-narrative poem, in which the 'chain of story' is replaced by chains that, being more complex, are harder to keep in view: the 'chain of reason' that orders the poem, and the 'chain of being' it is used to evoke.

(iv) *An Essay on Man*

An Essay on Man displays many of the concerns with comprehensiveness and structure seen in the two poems discussed so far. The 'essays', obviously, share a genre and a source (Horace), and although *An Essay on Man* departs from *An Essay on Criticism* in

[200] In Books II and IV. See *TE*, VII, pp. 177-185; pp. 252-262. In the letter to Robert Digby where he mentions the 'Indexes', Pope adds that 'I've also been oblig'd to leave unfinish'd in my desk the Heads of two Essays, one on the *Theology* and *Morality* of *Homer*, and another on the *Oratory* of *Homer* and *Vergil*', *Correspondence*, ii, p. 43.

its allusions to *De Rerum Natura*,[201] Pope seems to have recognized the poems' affinities, proposing in 1743 to publish the two (with Warburton's comments) in a single volume in order to test the waters ahead of his projected 'collected' edition.[202] There are also clear thematic and formal correspondences, with 'parts' and 'wholes' recurring through both poems, often in the same kinds of complex formations. However, where the earlier poem makes Homer the exemplary backdrop to its pronouncements, in *An Essay on Man* 'Nature' is the ground against which human philosophy is measured. In this respect, the latter poem may also be understood as part of an attempt to provide the type of total knowledge that Homer offers, with the never-completed *opus magnum* marking Pope's desire to emulate Homer's epic inventiveness and instructiveness on a larger (modern) scale and a more 'systematic' basis.[203] Thus the *Iliad* translation, in which the epic is surrounded by 'essays' on various topics, may be understood as a forerunner of the philosophical work which, as various letters indicate, Pope had envisaged as composed of an epic, *Brutus*, covering 'civil and ecclesiastical government', and a series of epistles or essays, including *An Essay on Man* and the *Moral Essays*.[204]

The fact that *An Essay on Man*, along with the *Moral Essays* and what eventually became book four of the *New Dunciad*, was originally conceived as part of a much bigger poetic project, complicates any assessment of how the poem's scale affects its structure.

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[201] Reuben Brower reads *An Essay on Man* in terms of its allusions and similarities to Horace's epistles and satires, whereas Bernard Fabian and Miriam Leranbaum find Lucretius to be a more significant model. See Reuben Brower, *Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 213; Leranbaum, *Alexander Pope's 'Opus Magnum': 1729-1744* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 40-63; Bernard Fabian, 'Pope and Lucretius: observations on *An Essay on Man*', *MLR*, 74 (1979), 524-37. On balance, both sources seem to be significant.

[202] See Pope to Warburton, 24 March 1742/3 and 17 November 1743, *Correspondence*, IV, pp. 448, 480.

[203] For a full account of the evidence for the format Pope envisaged for his '*opus magnum*' see Leranbaum, *Alexander Pope's 'Opus Magnum'*, *passim*. The place and function of *An Essay on Man* within this scheme is considered in 'Chapter 11', pp. 38-63.

[204] See Lerenbaum, pp. 155-174.

Although it is nowhere near as long as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, it is still the most extensive of Pope's non-narrative poems, and as such the scalar span separating part from whole is significant, just as in the Homer translations. However, Pope himself insists that the work is actually quite short if considered in relation to its topic. The relative brevity of the poem is, in the first instance, indicative of the '*few clear points*'[205] within the vast expanse of what is unknown (or at least not clearly understood) regarding '*the* Nature and State of MAN'.[206] Describing it as 'a *short* yet not *imperfect* system of Ethics' (ibid.) thus combines a poet's conventional deprecation of his work with the modest qualifications appropriate in a philosopher attempting to explain his own nature.

Poetic humility is quickly undercut, however, in the following paragraph, as Pope justifies his choice of verse over prose and reframes brevity as concision:

> principles, maxims, or precepts so written, both strike the reader more strongly at first, and are more easily retained by him afterwards: The other [reason] may seem odd, but it is true, I found I could express them more *shortly* this way than in prose itself; and nothing is more certain, than that much of the *force* as well as *grace* of arguments or instructions, depends on their *conciseness*.[207]

Brevity, which initially seemed to reflect a poverty of available matter, becomes a sign of semantic density or plenitude, as in *Spectator* 124, asserting poetic and essayistic compression against the 'dry' length of the formal prose treatise. The literal rather than comparative length of the poem, which comes to well over a thousand lines, is thus pre-emptively distinguished from the kinds of 'ample' volumes mocked by Addison, or sacrificed to Dulness in *The Dunciad*.[208] However, where Addison does without plot or

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[205] Alexander Pope, 'The Design', in *An Essay on Man*, ed. by Maynard Mack, *TE* 3. i., pp. 7-8 (p. 7).
[206] 'To the Reader', in *An Essay on Man*, p. 6.
[207] 'The Design', pp. 7-8.
[208] *The Dunciad*, I, l. 135.

system, Pope indicates in 'The Design' that *An Essay on Man* is ordered by the philosophical equivalent of the *Iliad*'s 'Chain of Story', 'the chain of reasoning' which is to bind poetry into a form appropriate to the topic.[209] This chain, in its turn, is consistently set against, and made inadequate to yet symbolic of, the 'chain of being'.[210]

Leranbaum notes that as 'a long, complex, and uneven poem', the *Essay* 'tends to resist integrated analysis', and the formal and rationative coherence or incoherence of the poem has long been a topic of debate for scholars.[211] A. D. Nuttall's influential formulation neatly encapsulates the critical state of play in the mid twentieth century: he suggests that earlier readings of the *Essay* have considered it either as a 'system' of knowledge or as a 'miscellany' of harmonious poetic beauties, and chooses the former reading only to conclude that, as a philosophical system, the poem is a failure.[212]

Since then such critical polarities in relation to Pope's work have frequently been challenged. In '*An Essay on Man* and the Polite Reader' Stephen Copley and David Fairer aim to break down the opposition between system and miscellany by placing the poem in the context of Addison's periodical essays and the polite readers he addressed, much as David Womersley does for *An Essay on Criticism*. Pope, they suggest, deliberately challenges polite readers by interpolating rhetorical, tonal and metrical 'disruptions' into his discourse, which fracture the imagined community of the *Spectator* and mark the gap between author and readers.[213] Here too, the contextualization needs to be adjusted to account for the *Spectator*'s own formal ambiguities and disjunctions, and

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[209] 'The Design', p. 8.
[210] For the philosophical import of the term in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, especially as it relates to notions of divine 'plenitude', see Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being; a Study of the History of an Idea (Wm. James Lectures, 1933)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1936), *passim*.
[211] Leranbaum, *Alexander Pope's 'Opus Magnum'*, p. 38.
[212] A. D. Nuttall, *Pope's 'Essay on Man'* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 185.
[213] Stephen Copley and David Fairer, 'An *Essay on Man* and the Polite Reader', in *Pope: New Contexts*, ed. by David Fairer (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), pp. 205-114, p. 217.

for the resistance to foolish readers or 'Moles' evinced by Addison, but nonetheless the comparison allows the poem's discursive 'oscillations' to be more clearly recognized. Harry Solomon's polemical defence of the *Essay* in the *Rape of the Text* is still more insistent, in its generally derogatory review of past critical (mis)readings of the poem, regarding the need for more nuanced interpretations. As a corrective he urges 'thick' rather than 'thin' intertextual perspectives and invokes the philosophical discourse of Academic Scepticism to argue that in *An Essay on Man* 'Pope creates the most powerful and profound synoptic description of reality in English' by means of paradox and metaphor.[214]

James Noggle also considers scepticism significant to the *Essay*, and like Fairer and Copley is interested in the poem's discursive gaps, but he argues that they should be understood as part of the Tory satirists' collective distrust of the kind of self-aggrandizing 'Whig sublime' seen, for instance, in the poetry of Blackmore and the criticism of Dennis. The logical contradictions and descriptive chasms in the *Essay*'s accounts of human faculties and universal order are, in Noggle's view, characteristic of the 'skeptical sublime', in which super-human phenomena are only transferred to human discourse at the cost of radical cognitive uncertainty.[215] In *Scepticism and Literature* Fred Parker expands on these insights, highlighting scepticism's association with the essay form (as in Montaigne's *Essais*) to argue that although Pope seemed at times to want the *Essay on Man* to function as a philosophical system, he also envisaged it as a series of dynamic 'assays' resulting from, and in, 'a vision that accommodates inconsistency: a *concordia*

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[214] Harry M. Solomon, *The Rape of the Text: Reading and Misreading Pope's Essay on Man* (Tuscaloosa and London: Alabama UP, 1993), p. 181.
[215] James Noggle, *Skeptical Sublime: Aesthetic Ideology in Pope and the Tory Satirists* (Oxford: OUP, 2001).

discors, a principle basic to the composition of Popean verse, but in this poem pressed into something like metaphysical status'.[216]

On the basis of these critical insights, the arrangement of parts within the whole of this extensive-yet-concise fragment of a much greater work (as hinted at in the last paragraph of 'The Design') may be understood as related to its attempt to simultaneously describe two different things. On the one hand it seems to offer us humanity's incomplete *view* of divine order, those '*few clear points*', which may be capable of systematic description, like an accurately-drawn '*Map*' of partially and inaccurately known territories (just as maps of the Greek peninsula and the plain of Troy clarify the actions and scenes of Homer's epic world). On the other hand, the metaphor of map-making in 'The Design' is almost one of geographical exploration. Pope writes that 'I am here only opening the *fountains*, and clearing the passage',[217] and the metaphor famously continues through the opening lines of 'Epistle I', suggesting that the poem also represents the confused and variable *experience* of such an order, which resists coherent and definitive expression and instead requires the dramatic dimension of '*the Epistolary Way of Writing*'.[218] Therefore, although the dizzying shifts between different senses of 'parts' seen in *An Essay on Criticism* are nothing like as closely packed in the later poetical essay, the terms are still important, unstable and ambiguous, functioning as pivots between different frames of reference and modes of representation. The poem progresses from addressing man's view of and place in the 'great chain' of being in the first epistle to considering how individuals' 'ruling Passions' function singly and

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[216] Fred Parker, *Scepticism and Literature: An Essay on Pope, Hume, Sterne, and Johnson* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), pp. 103-127 (p. 113).
[217] 'The Design', *TE*, III.i, p. 8.
[218] 'To the Reader', *TE*, III.i., p. 6.

collectively in the second, before turning back to order, this time primarily social and political, and then closing, in the final epistle, with a consideration of human happiness. Both at this wider level and in the specific uses of the words in individual couplets and passages, 'parts' makes a series of verbal equivalences across the different contexts, linking the portion of knowledge given to man and his specific place in the natural and social orders with the blind partiality of the 'Ruling Passion', as well as with the abilities and roles which providence allots to him. However, in accordance with *An Essay on Man*'s main theme, direct contrasts between 'parts' and 'whole' appear much more frequently than in *An Essay on Criticism*, insistently asserting the incommensurability of the two.

In 'Epistle I', 'part' and 'whole' typically relate to the natural order, conceived as a 'great chain, that draws all to agree' (33) and derived, as Maynard Mack's annotations indicate, from traditional themes and arguments of Christian apologetics. The result is a split perspective, whereby sequence and progression are placed alongside divisive binaries which depict both extremes and analogues, as when the poet asks

> But of this frame the bearings, and the ties,
> The strong connections, nice dependencies,
> Gradations just, has thy pervading soul
> Look'd thro'? or can a part contain the whole? (29-32)

The interrogatory form recalls the sublime, admonitory 'apostrophes spoken to Job from the whirlwind', which is pertinent given that Pope in the poem frequently replicates the divine manipulations of scale which in the Old Testament re-imagine the Jobean

Leviathan as a puny plaything.[219] In fact, the technique is used in these very lines, as the possibility of perceiving '[g]radations just', that is, the extensive order of plenitude, is collapsed into the bare distinction between 'part' and 'whole', negating the previous lines' hypothetical, interrogative delineation of the divine structure in which 'worlds on worlds compose one universe' and 'system into system runs' (24-5). In the course of the epistle, a series of such incompatible states or identities are contrasted, narrowing human existence and understanding down to a 'certain point': part and whole are as incommensurate as man and God, man and ox or angel and man.

Another deflation of expansive description occurs in the hierarchical catalogue of creatures, which at first seems authoritatively to track the scale of living beings:

> Far as Creation's ample range extends,
> The scale of sensual, mental pow'rs ascends:
> Mark how it mounts, to Man's imperial race,
> From the green myriads in the peopled grass:
> What modes of sight betwixt each wide extreme,
> The mole's dim curtain, and the lynx's beam:
> Of smell, the headlong lioness between,
> And hound sagacious on the tainted green:
> Of hearing, from the life that fills the flood,
> To that which warbles thro' the vernal wood:
> The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine!
> Feels at each thread, and lives along the line:
> In the nice bee, what sense so subtly true
> From pois'nous herbs extracts the healing dew:
> How Instinct varies in the grov'ling swine,
> Compar'd, half-reas'ning elephant, with thine: (207-22)

Initially the animals are listed more-or-less according to their size and sophistication: starting with Man, moving to mammals, down to fish and birds, and finally to insect life.

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[219] Mack, *TE* I, p. 17, ll. 31-4n. In Leranbaum, *Alexander Pope's 'Opus Magnum'*, these 'Jobean' questions are seen as also reminiscent of the scornful and satiric apostrophes in *De Rerum Natura* (pp. 46-7).

We seem to be descending gradually down the scale, surveying the whole. However, what we are actually getting is a series of 'extremes' of acuity for each of the senses, so that the scale of life is reduced to pairs of 'points' that 'mark' out the span of natural capacities insofar as it is known to man – mole to lynx, lioness to hound, sea-life to song-bird – and then, as the spider's linear habitat reduces two dimensions to one, a single virtuosic exemplar each for touch and taste.

The foolish temerity of the reader who expects to scan a complete chain is further emphasized by the sudden turn in the final couplet, where from the delicacy of the 'nice' bee's 'sense so subtly true' the sequence is rudely broken by the 'grov'ling swine' and 'half-reasn'ing elephant'. The final line also re-emphasizes the satirical tone of the imperative 'Mark' at the start of the verse-paragraph, as the disciplined, authoritative concision of the catalogue is 'pointed' by a striking and ambiguous re-appearance of the second person. On one reading it seems to represent a shift in addressee, as though the narrator has unexpectedly condescended to one of the exemplum-beasts within the poetic bestiary he has just written into being. The shift is both comic and a little surprising, given the return in the following line to the abstractions of philosophy: ''[t]wixt that [i.e. half-reasoning instinct], and Reason, what a nice barrier' (223). However, the wider vagueness of the epistle's intended addressee – who, at this stage, is hardly Bolingbroke, but rather a generalized representative of ignorant mankind – is further heightened by the linear extension of a sentence which starts with the usual second person imperative directed, one assumes, at a shadowy collective audience, but switches in the final line to a very definite singular, so that the reader exhorted to 'mark' in line 209 is suddenly singled out by the narrator and personally insulted as a 'half-reas'ning elephant'.

Simultaneously, this address deflates the pretensions of 'Man's imperial race', the collective of which any individual reader is the representative, by demotion to the bottom of the textual, if not the actual sensory, 'chain'. Given the intervening lines, and their complex punctuation, one imagines that the dig is designed to be overlooked by 'half-reas'ning' readers.

While a scientific or philosophical view of the full chain of being is rejected as unfeasible, however, the poem makes other types of understanding available. The implied negative response to the question in line 32 seems to be made explicit as plain assertion in line 60, '['t]is but a part we see, and not a whole', but the distinction between 'containing' and 'seeing' is significant. Human 'soul' is 'pervading' (31), in the sense of to 'spread, extend, diffuse; to be present and apparent throughout', but also in the now rare sense of to 'go or pass through; to cross, to traverse.'[220] The epithet is of course satirically ironic, but if taken 'straight', the implication is that while the 'pervading soul' which fills the body may not be able to 'look' through the whole, it can somehow transcend its bodily limits. Although man's view is constrained to a mere part of the chain, *as* a part, his being does depict – analogically – the 'ties and nice dependencies' that structure the universal 'whole': 'The gen'ral ORDER, since the whole began/ Is kept in Nature, and is kept in Man' (171-2). This logic, implicit from early on in the Epistle, plays an increasingly significant role towards the end of it:

> IX. What if the foot, ordain'd the dust to tread,
> Or hand to toil, aspir'd to be the head?
> What if the head, the eye, or ear repin'd
> To serve mere engines to the ruling Mind?

[220] *OED,* 'pervade, *v.*', definitions 1.a., 2. Among the illustrative quotations for the second definition is a line from Pope's translation of Homer's *Odyssey*.

> Just as absurd for any part to claim
> To be another, in this gen'ral frame:
> Just as absurd, to mourn the tasks or pains
> The great directing mind of all ordains.
> All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
> Whose body Nature is, and God the Soul; (259-68)

It is this analogical and essentially figurative (specifically, synecdochic) reasoning that initiates the final section of the Epistle, in which satiric refutation, accusation and interrogation make way for a sublime evocation of universal pervasion of 'God the soul',

> Great in the earth, as in th'æthereal frame,
> Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
> Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,
> Lives thro' all life, extends thro' all extent,
> Spreads undivided, operates unspent,
> Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
> As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart;
> As full, as perfect, in vile Man that mourns,
> As the rapt Seraph that adores and burns; (270-78)

This is not 'systematic' description, like the hierarchies or taxonomies of the earlier (partial and satirical) catalogues, but an apparently unsystematic one – earth, sun, breeze, trees, soul, hair, heart, Man and Seraph – which nonetheless offers an image of comprehensive order thanks to the system of figurative, syntactic and metrical correspondences and parallels which allow the poet to extend across the extent at will. As Solomon argues, paradox and metaphor allow Pope to make distinctions and comparisons without claiming a panoptic view of the universe; so does the combination of figures familiar from Old Testament verse, anaphora and parallelism, with the symmetries and equivalences of the heroic couplet. Thus, in the later Epistles, figurative ties of similitude and formal ties of metre and syntax allow Pope to relate physical to mental 'parts', compare the societies of ants and bees with that of man, or man to his

maker, or narrate the development of human society and then draw moral lessons from it as from an parable or fable. However, as with the wave simile in the *Iliad*, the reader is left to infer the exact grounds of similitude within propositions, and the longstanding controversies regarding the *Essay*'s ultimate metaphysical thesis are proof that despite the introduction of 'Arguments' and footnotes to facilitate the task, it is nonetheless an onerous one.

This consideration of 'parts' and 'wholes' in 'Epistle I' suggests that for Pope (at least in this specific context) the vast universal structure *as perceived by humankind* will naturally resemble the kind of man-made structure represented by poetry, with the relations between things in nature becoming, when translated into human terms, similar to the relations between things in poems. What gets lost in the transfer from reality to perception and poem, producing the sceptical aporia that for Noggle shadows even the *Essay*'s most sublime passages, is the absolute scale of greatness which in a work like Dennis's *Te Deum* is understood to transfer without significant loss from deity, through poet and text, to the reader. If the *Essay*'s poet 'expatiates', that is 'writes at length' and 'wanders', the extent of his text or journey seems to have no necessary relation to the extent of the 'territory' he describes or the 'ground' he covers, and the reader in turn can have no confidence that the poem's full sense has been grasped.[221] Unlike the ancient epic poet, the modern philosophical poet and his readers can never fully 'map' their object; however, they can, presumably, apply to it the same kind of provisional exegetical techniques as are demanded by the poem.

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[221] *OED*, definitions 2 and 1.a.

Pope represented a challenging precedent for Thomson, Young and Akenside. All three rejected key elements of his politico-poetics – perhaps most obviously in their choice of blank verse over heroic couplets in their long poems – yet they undoubtedly admired the man and his works. *An Essay on Man* was a major influence on Young's and Akenside's own most extensive and ambitious compositions. Published anonymously, it had been immediately successful, and although the critical backlash began once Pope made his authorship public, the poem quickly took on the status of a 'classic'. *Night Thoughts* and *The Pleasures of Imagination* have long been recognized as engaging intensively with the view of human nature that it describes, and the standard critical approach has been to show the various ways in which the two later poems take issue with the theodicy of the *Essay*. I will be arguing, however, that Akenside and Young also engage with Pope's explorations of form and with his implicit theorizations of reading, which suggest that the process by which readers come to understand long poems is a model for cognition in general. From this perspective, the Whig poets have more in common with Pope. Thus Young, in *Night Thoughts* takes up Pope's part/whole distinction to note that

> *Parts*, like Half-sentences, confound; the *Whole*
> Conveys the Sense, and GOD is understood;
> Who not in *Fragments* writes to Human Race;
> Read his *whole* Volume, Sceptic! then, Reply.
> *This*, *This* is *Thinking-free*, a Thought that grasps
> Beyond a Grain, and looks beyond an Hour.[222]

[222] Young, *Night Thoughts*, VII, ll. 1238-43.

More explicitly than in *An Essay on Man*, poetry here is the trope by which the greater Creation is understood, a notion which also assigns extremely high philosophical value to the form and implicitly suggests the importance of reading *Night Thoughts* itself, or other long poems, in full.

Thomson's *The Seasons*, however, had already been written by the time Pope published *An Essay on Man*, and in this case the influence seems to have gone both ways, so that he and Pope carried on a kind of conversation in poetry across the span of their careers.[223] Thomson, perhaps responding to the spider of the *Battle of the Books*, produced a gruesome mock-heroic spider in *Summer* (1727) which transfers the comparison from the Moderns to Swift and his fellow Scriblerian satirists:

> But chief, to heedless Flies the Window proves
> A constant Death; where, gloomily retir'd,
> The Villain Spider lives, cunning, and fierce,
> Mixture abhorr'd! Amid a mangled Heap
> Of Carcasses, in eager Watch, He sits,
> Surveying all his waving Snares around.
> Within an Inch the dreadless Wanderer oft
> Passes, as oft the Ruffian shows his Front.
> The Prey at last ensnar'd, He, dreadful, darts,
> With rapid Glide, along the leaning Line;
> And, fixing in the Fly his cruel Fangs,
> Strides backward, grimly pleas'd[224]

Pope in turn, in *An Essay on Man*, seems to have taken note of the single, poetic dimension of this creature, which it so territorially defends, and produced the catalogue discussed above, where the bloodthirsty beast turns into an 'exquisitely fine' inhabitant of verse who 'Feels at each thread, and lives along

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[223] The final, affectionate word went to Thomson, who in *The Castle of Indolence* (1748) introduced Pope as 'the Bard, a little Druid-Wight/ Of wither'd Aspect; but his Eye was keen,/ With Sweetness mixed' (p. 57, Canto II, xxxiii).

[224] *Summer* (1727), p. 27. See 'Summer', *OET*, ll. 267-78.

the line' (I, 216-17). The borrowing thus makes the poem itself an intricate web of wit in which to trap 'the dreadless Wanderer' – or 'half-reasn'ing elephant'. As will be shown in the following chapter, a similar kind of complex, conversational allusion is used by Thomson throughout *The Seasons*, taking in not just Pope but a whole library-full of Ancients and Moderns, who help to shape his poem.

PART II: CASE STUDIES

CHAPTER 3
THE SEASONS AS ALLUSIVE MAZE

> What you see depends on where you stand, and thus, at one and the same time, labyrinths are single (there is one physical structure) and double: they simultaneously incorporate order and disorder, clarity and confusion, unity and multiplicity, artistry and chaos. They may be perceived as a path (a linear but circuitous passage to a goal) or as pattern (a complete symmetrical design) […] They are dynamic from a maze-walker's perspective and static from a privileged onlooker's point of view […] they describe both the linearity and the architecture of space and time. Thus mazes encode the very principle of doubleness, contrariety, paradox, *Concordia discors*[225]

Introduction

In *The Background of Thomson's 'Seasons'*, Alan Dugald McKillop draws attention to the intriguing recurrence within the poem of the 'statuesque', noting that 'in the midst of [Thomson's] scenes he often puts stationary figures, used in an elaborately decorative way […] he was always fascinated by the idea of human figures frozen or petrified in natural postures'.[226] As an example McKillop cites the tale of Celadon and Amelia, 'a matchless Pair,/ With equal Virtue form'd' who are struck by lightning as they embrace:

> From his void Embrace,
> (Mysterious Heaven!) that moment, to the Ground,
> A blacken'd Corse, was struck the beauteous Maid.
> But who can paint the Lover, as he stood,
> Pierc'd by severe Amazement, hating Life,
> Speechless, and fix'd in all the Death of Woe!
> So, faint Resemblance! on the Marble-Tomb

[225] Penelope Reed Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth from Classical Antiquity through the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990), p. 1.
[226] Alan D. McKillop, *The Background of Thomson's Seasons* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1942), pp. 190, 71.

> The well-dissembled Mourner stooping stands,
> For ever silent, and for ever sad.[227]

McKillop ascribes the introduction of such figures, in part, to Thomson's 'love of sculpture', but he adds that

> [t]here is no classic austerity about Thomson's statues, […] they are both realistic and sentimental; they often represent natural catastrophes that are bizarre rather than sublime and are used as decorations that surprise and shock by an odd lifelikeness. They are, in fact, poetical waxworks.[228]

The phrase 'poetical waxworks' conveys the somewhat mawkish melodrama of the episode and of others like it, but McKillop does not dwell on details which might offer a way of integrating Thomson's stationary figures into the whole of the poem.[229] In the above scene, which is introduced specifically as an example of how 'not always on the guilty head/ Descends the fated flash' (1170-1), providential violence is figured as physically and psychologically immobilizing. Amelia, struck by lightning, is rendered both motionless and lifeless. Celadon is '[p]ierc'd by severe Amazement', that is, by his own emotional response to the loss he has sustained, which 'fixes' him in the emotional equivalent of lifelessness, 'the Death of Woe'. The verse replicates the narrative full stop by switching from Thomson's trademark enjambments to consistently end-stopped lines whose rhythms are constrained by numerous punctuation marks, and the figure of

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[227] 'Summer' in James Thomson, *The Seasons*, ed. by James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) [henceforth '*OET*'] (ll. 1172-3 and 1214-22).
[228] McKillop, p. 71. See also pp. 139-40, 145-8.
[229] Other examples include the various animals struck by lightning a few lines earlier (such as the 'soft Flocks, with that same harmless Look/ They wore alive', ll. 1153-4); the '[d]isaster'd' shepherd frozen to death in a blizzard ('Winter' *OET*, ll. 278-321) and the lover 'fix'd/ In melancholy Site' ('Spring' *OET* 1022-3). In 'Winter' Sir Hugh Willoughby's search for the North-East Passage ends in disaster as 'he with his hapless Crew, Each full-exerted at his several Task,/ Froze into Statues' (*OET* 933-34), and in the 1730 edition the inhabitants of the petrified city in 'Summer' are also statues (James Thomson, *The Seasons, 1730* (Menston: Scholar Press, 1970) [henceforth *1730*], ll. 718-748).

Celadon is stationed in the static, present-tense confines of a simile.[230] As we shall see, recognizing this violent yet immobilizing 'amazement', and the way in which it engenders (*pace* McKillop) a sublime confluence of the physical and the psychological, of topic and text, will be key to developing a fuller understanding of how the poem as a whole is structured and how disparate parts, including those that seem merely decorative or illustrative, fit into it.

However, the sense that these stationary figures are nothing but bizarre excrescences upon the poem's surface, like waxworks or – perhaps more appropriately – grotesque garden statuary inconsequentially dotted about the lines and landscapes, finds corroboration of sorts in the attention that has been paid in the last couple of decades to the poem's representations and enactments of fluid motion over and above its painterly (or statuesque) descriptions. This trend might be said to revert to eighteenth-century readings, or to Thomson's own view of the work. His 'Hymn', placed at the end of the 1730 subscriber's edition of *The Seasons*, suggests that the latter's main concern is the mimesis of continuous seasonal process (rather than, say, the depiction of arresting tableaux):

> MYSTERIOUS round! what skill, what force divine,
> Deep-felt, in these appear! A simple train,
> Yet so harmonious mix'd, so fitly join'd,
> One following one in such inchanting sort,
> Shade, unperceiv'd, so softening into shade,
> And all so forming such a perfect whole,
> That, as they still succeed, they ravish still.[231]

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[230] For compelling evidence for the semantic significance of 'accidentals' in *The Seasons* see Robert Inglesfield, 'The British Library Revisions to Thomson's The Seasons', *Library: A Quarterly Journal of Bibliography*, 1 (1979), 62-69.

[231] 'A Hymn', in *1730*, pp. 231-37 (ll. 24-30). 'these' in line 232 refers to the seasons, but implicitly refers to the four parts of *The Seasons* as well.

Similarly, Samuel Johnson noted how Thomson in the poem 'leads us through the appearances of things as they are successively varied by the vicissitudes of the seasons'[232] and more recent critics have been at pains to emphasize the active, verb-intensive quality of its descriptions of nature. Margaret Doody co-opts *The Seasons* into her manifesto for the exuberant dynamism of Augustan poetry. W. B. Hutchings draws (anachronistically) on mid-eighteenth-century German aesthetics to argue that Thomson responds to literature's perceived affinity for narrative and process by conveying description through narratives of perception. Building on such insights, Ingrid Horrocks understands the poem as dramatizing human experiences of the landscape rather than replicating it cartographically and Zoë Kinsley suggests various ordering tropes which set the poem's landscapes in motion.[233] For Richard Terry, this dynamism extends to the type of attention the poem demands: *The Seasons*, he argues, 'forces its readers to *enact* the mental process of theodicy' (my emphasis), piecing together the different parts of the poem into a coherent and cohesive vision of divine providence.[234] More recently still, in his 2012 BSECS conference keynote lecture, David Fairer countered certain Romantic scholars' dismissal of Augustan poetry as 'static' with examples of natural and agricultural 'processes' taken from *The Seasons*.[235]

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[232] *Lives*, iv, p. 104.

[233] Doody, *The Daring Muse: Augustan Poetry Reconsidered*). W. B. Hutchings, ''Can Pure Description Hold the Place of Sense?': Thomson's Landscape Poetry', in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary*, ed. by Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2000), pp. 35-65; Ingrid Horrocks, "Circling Eye' and 'Houseless Stranger': The New Eighteenth-Century Wanderer (Thomson to Goldsmith)', *ELH*, 77 (2010), 665-87. Zoë Kinsley, 'Landscapes 'Dynamically' in Motion': Revisiting Issues of Structure and Agency in Thomson's The Seasons', *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature*, 41:1 (2005), 3-25.

[234] Richard Terry, "Through Nature Shedding Influence Malign': Thomson's The Seasons as a Theodicy', *Durham University Journal*, 87:2 (1995), 257-68.

[235] These accounts of *The Seasons* as 'dynamically in motion' develop out of earlier twentieth-century accounts of it as a complex mingling or ordering of parts, that is, as a structure which represents a blended whole (like the Newtonian rainbow). See for instance Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Varied God: A Critical Study of Thomson's The Seasons* (Berkeley, CA; Los Angeles, CA: U of California P, 1959), Ralph Cohen,

Although these analyses are compelling, and seem to leave little room for further debate over whether or not *The Seasons* is a 'dynamic' poem, I would nonetheless like to reconsider the question in light of the moments of stasis, such as that of the lightning strike, which regularly interrupt the poem's seasonal (or historical) processes and complicate the accounts of natural forces in the rest of the poem. Thomson rarely offers any exegesis of the natural phenomena which intermittently intrude to rob creatures of motion and agency; the only interpretation of Amelia's death provided is a negative one ('not always on the guilty head'). Its elucidation thus requires it to be placed in the much broader context of the poems' dynamic whole, which in turn is perceived differently when we mark its incorporation of violent arrest. In fact, in Thomson's poem, stasis and process are interdependent. The disaster which cuts short the couple's pastoral idyll is prefigured by an interruption of life's 'clear united Stream', a shift which inaugurates the intrusion of supernatural agency and allows Thomson to modulate from narrative to the static, timeless terror of the catastrophe. The episode opens with an account of Edenic perfection, the protagonists' lives passing in diurnal pleasures:

> THEY lov'd. But such their guileless Passion was,
> As in the Dawn of Time inform'd the Heart
> Of Innocence, and undissembling Truth.
> […]
> Alone, amid the Shades,
> Still in harmonious Intercourse they liv'd
> The rural Day, and talk'd the flowing Heart,
> Or sigh'd, and look'd unutterable Things.
>
> So pass'd their Life, a clear united Stream,
> By Care unruffled; till, in evil Hour,
> The Tempest caught them on the tender Walk,
> Heedless how far, and where its Mazes stray'd,

The Unfolding of The Seasons: A Study of James Thomson's Poem (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins U.P.; Routledge & K. Paul, 1970).

> While, with each other blest, creative Love
> Still bade eternal *Eden* smile around.[236]

In a sense, the 'evil Hour' signals the start of the narrative, just as Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden initiates postlapsarian history. However, it also interrupts or 'ruffles' a smoothly-flowing stream of earlier experience. The couple are, effectively, 'caught' up out of their harmonious existence into an alternative form of history, drawn into the tempest's straying 'mazes'. This new state and lexical focus both prefigure and determine the tragic conclusion. In the line 'Heedless how far, and where its Mazes stray'd', process shifts towards stasis and natural configurations merge with psychological states. The figuration of the tempest as a 'maze' superimposes the meteorological event on the landscape across which Celadon and Amelia wander. The subject of 'heedless' is indeterminate, potentially applying both to the tempest and to the couple, and this, along with the semantic congruence of 'walk' and 'stray'd', overlaps physical event and mental activity. Read one way, the personified tempest, heedless and straying, is imbued with psychological agency. Alternatively, if Celadon and Amelia are 'heedless', they are likely to stray or mistake their path as in a maze, moving unawares towards a violent termination of motion in death and amazement.

It seems likely that Thomson here is drawing consciously on the etymological link between the pattern, 'maze', and the state of confusion, 'amazement'. The present chapter explores *The Seasons* in terms of this link, and takes as its focus the ways in which Thomson develops and plays on these and associated terms in order to represent both the text and its object, seasonal nature, as mazes, providing a flexible conceptual framework which collapses the dimensions of space and time into each other. Penelope

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[236] 'Summer', *OET*, 1177-1194.

Reed Doob's comments on the 'double perspective' of classical and medieval mazes (quoted at the head of this chapter) also apply to Thomson's more modern interpretation of the trope. In *The Seasons*, 'maze' and associated terms are used to highlight the ways in which the stationary and the dynamic correspond, so that particular phenomena and their effects may be fluidly, provisionally conceived and written of in terms of a total, ordered and eternal whole.

My reading of *The Seasons* rests, inevitably, on a number of earlier studies; a summary of their insights will help to introduce and contextualize the main points of the present inquiry. At the start of her monograph on Christopher Smart's religious poetry, Harriet Guest examines the works of various eighteenth-century poets who, because they draw on both biblical and natural philosophical discourse, must 'more or less self-consciously, [...] *negotiate* the authority with which they speak'.[237] Poetic diction becomes both a focus for the tensions between these discourses and a key locus of the poets' negotiation between them; therefore, 'in this poetry [...] the manner of the poet becomes itself the matter of the poem' (8). Thus, for example, Thomson's 'splendid fluency enables him to describe the explanations [...] of natural philosophers in juxtaposition to the more biblical discourses of natural description and revelation' (5). A similar concern with authority in eighteenth-century literature appears in John Barrell's criticism, although he pays little attention to how poems of the period voice religious sentiment and, as we have seen, is interested rather in the ideological formulations embedded in the apparently neutral gaze of figures such as the *The Seasons*' gentleman-

[237] Harriet Guest, *A Form of Sound Words: The Religious Poetry of Christopher Smart* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 3.

poet narrator.[238] Perhaps the most interesting attempt at tracing the marks of 'ideology' in *The Seasons* is that of Kevis Goodman. In *Georgic Modernity and the Mediation of History* she examines how *The Seasons* is structured by the conventions and concerns of georgic, which she argues 'offer[s] itself to that period as an occasion for negotiating temporal flux, spatial extension, and concerns about the transmission not only of traditional precept (Virgil's *praecepta*) but also of new scientific information and "intelligence"'.[239] This reading, like Barrell's, usefully situates *The Seasons*' events and scenes in the context of a perceived contemporary extension of the scales of time and space. However, it also complicates the trajectory from text to ideological subtext which characterizes ideology critique, with interesting results. For Goodman, georgic's self-reflexive fascination with mediation allows it to voice 'the noise of living' (4), that is the 'elements of the real [which] remain so elusive to positivist or history-of-ideas analysis' yet are not 'simple absence' (36). This sensitivity to the minute, the elusive and the evanescent produces a finely calibrated account of how *The Seasons* mediates the sensory distortions of natural philosophical knowledge through georgic's characteristically allusive, elaborate *versus*.

In line with her stated topic, Goodman focuses on 'noise' – 'displeasure, discomfort, sensory and affective dissonance' – in parts of *The Seasons* which reflect 'georgic', i.e. natural-philosophical concerns. However, negative sensations 'erupt' in other places too, for example in the lightning episode discussed above: the 'amazement' experienced by Celadon and transferred by poetic mimesis to the reader might be said to

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[238] John Barrell, *English Literature in History 1730-80: An Equal, Wide Survey* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1983). For the ideological resonances of the poem see also Tim Fulford's persuasive close readings in *Landscape, Liberty and Authority*, where he argues that 'Thomson developed a discourse intended […] to appeal to and renew the taste of gentlemen' (p. 18).

[239] Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism*, p. 10.

represent the 'noise' of Providence rather than that of history. As it happens, the story of the lovers struck by lightning is drawn from the news culture Goodman identifies as a central context for Cowper's much later long poem, *The Task,* and also bears the traces of earlier poetic mediation. In his edition of *The Seasons* James Sambrook notes that the tale seems to be based on 'newspaper reports of the two rustic lovers struck dead by lightning at Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire, in July 1718, and on Pope's well-known epitaph upon the lovers', but Thomson 'handles the story for a devotional end, in the manner of the Book of Job, to show God's power and man's incomprehension of God's purposes'.[240] As we will see, such procedures are typical of Thomson's engagement with the 'real' and the 'natural': non-literary content is passed through the filters of poetic precedent as a means of activating an exegetical consciousness in the reader whilst avoiding the enthusiastic literalism of millenarian history.[241]

In effect, what Goodman's account lacks is any sustained engagement with the 'biblical discourse' and the modern Christian literary inheritance which Guest recognizes as crucial to poetry of the period. By seizing on the *Georgics* as *the* prototype for eighteenth-century poetic engagements with 'the real', she inevitably overlooks the way in which late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century literary culture draws on other sources and modes to address or imitate the rapid expansion of material production, of scientific knowledge, of geographical reach, and so on. Earlier chapters of this dissertation have suggested that eighteenth-century writers inherit from the early-modern period various tropes and figures which combine Christian and classical traditions and provide various means of compassing the extended horizons of the present. However,

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[240] *OET*, p. 224.

[241] The poem's non-literary sources are addressed by McKillop and form the basis of Richard Terry's reading ("Through Nature Shedding Influence Malign': Thomson's the Seasons as a Theodicy').

Goodman bypasses Milton, and Dennis's and Addison's readings of him, and claims that the *Georgics* are of more significance to Thomson or Cowper than a work such as the *Aeneid*, although the latter is much more deeply embedded within post-classical literary traditions. Therefore, one of the secondary aims of this chapter will be to extend and qualify Goodman's readings of the tones and allusions of Thomson's voice by using a figure (the maze) instead of a genre (georgic) as the focal lens. Even more clearly than georgic, literary mazes are associated with digression,[242] diversion and doubling back – all procedures which Goodman identifies as key to Thomson's 'song'. Furthermore, mazes often feature in parts of *The Seasons* in which the verbal medium becomes particularly prominent and where literary allusion clusters around the pains (and pleasures) of nature's noise. Finally, Thomson's mazes might be read as types of the 'mighty maze' to which Pope would later, again only litotically, assign a coherent plan: not only do they refer back to earlier texts, they also gesture beyond literature, towards the greatness of Creation, using the tropes described in the 'Introduction'.

(i) Christian labyrinths

Lisa Steinman usefully describes Thomson's allusions in *The Seasons* as forming 'a kind of chronological layering' which traces and claims a complex poetic genealogy, and she argues that Milton is foremost among Thomson's literary forebears.[243] However, she interprets his concern with developing and defining a suitable poetic voice as a sign of his 'anxiety' in relation to re-imagining the voice of recently-canonized poets like Milton for a contemporary culture:

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[242] See Anne Cotterill, *Digressive Voices in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 2004).
[243] Lisa M. Steinman, *Masters of Repetition: Poetry, Culture, and Work in Thomson, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Emerson* (New York, NY: St. Martin's, 1998), p. 18.

> he heard the language or music associated with poetic power as the province of earlier (and given Thomson's Whig views, less enlightened) writers with whom he tried to rank himself. The language that in Milton was the voice of private inspiration still marked high poetry but also seemed obscure or suspect in the present.[244]

The historiography Steinman invokes here is less unequivocally progressivist than she implies, especially in the realm of poetry: alongside triumphant celebrations of modern British culture, Whig members of the Patriot movement of the 30s and 40s also looked back nostalgically to a British past untainted by modern luxury and corruption. Furthermore, it was Milton's relative modernity, not his archaism, that had made him such a totemic figure to early eighteenth-century critics like Dennis and Addison: as Dustin Griffin notes, 'Milton for the eighteenth century was a giant of the *recent* past'.[245] Thus it is not clear that Thomson considers Milton as particularly 'less enlightened' or, therefore, a problematic source of 'authority'. In opposition to Steinman, I would suggest that 'the often commented upon abrupt shifts of scene in [Thomson's] poetry' do not represent 'a series of falls into self-consciousness about the derivative nature of his poetic vision' but moments at which his prophetic flight towards a perspective of omniscience are countered by the imagined, Jobean retort of natural-providential power.[246] In other words, insofar as Thomson has 'doubts about his own authority', they relate primarily to the broader problem of enthusiasm that Guest describes as prevalent in religious poetry of

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[244] Steinman, p. 25.

[245] Griffin, *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century*, p. 3. For a survey of allusions to *Paradise Lost* in *The Seasons* see pp. 188-202.

[246] Steinman, p. 3. As Sandro Jung points out, the trope of the soaring poet, ambitiously attempting heretofore unassailable heights, is characteristic of the classical ode. However, in *The Seasons*, like Dennis in his *Te Deum*, the poet effectively finds himself in competition with divine, Christian powers, and therefore his expressions of insufficiency are more than formulaic. Jung, Sandro, 'Epic, Ode, or Something New: The Blending of Genres in Thomson's Spring', *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature*, 43 (2007), 146-65.

the period, not to an anachronistic anxiety about 'originality'.[247] Steinman's description of *The Seasons* as 'a pastiche of borrowings', and her faintly surprised acknowledgement that 'his contemporaries do not seem to have found his use of verbal echoes problematic', suggest a misconception of the status of literary imitation in the period, which leads her to puzzle somewhat redundantly over 'how his contemporaries could hear such echoes and still understand Thomson's poetry as nonderivative'.[248] While attitudes to poetic allusion do change substantially during the first half of the eighteenth century, with 'originality' increasingly given precedence over imitation, Thomson's own practice draws on more traditional Augustan literary values and practices.[249] Thus although Samuel Johnson, writing almost half a century later, stresses its novelty, *The Seasons* must be understood in the context of the British literary market of the 1720s, 30s, and even 40s, which is dominated by verse that imitates, parodies and alludes to Biblical, Classical, and, increasingly, vernacular literature.[250]

Steinman's diagnosis of a Bloomian anxiety of influence may be countered by tracing several associated tributaries of generic affiliation and literary allusion through the various editions of the different 'Seasons' which appeared between 1726 and 1746. Early editions of 'Winter', the first part to appear, have typically been understood as conforming to the conventions of the religious sublime, a mode or style deeply influenced by *Paradise Lost*. For example, Aaron Hill's imprint can clearly be seen in the 'preface'

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[247] Ibid.
[248] Ibid., pp. 10-11.
[249] On poetic allusion in the Augustan age see Christopher Ricks, 'Allusion: the Poet as Heir', in *Studies in the Eighteenth Century III: Papers Presented at the Third David Nichol Smith Memorial Seminar, Canberra 1973*, ed. by R.F. Brissenden and J.C. Eade (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) and Roger Lonsdale, 'Gray and Allusion', in *Studies in the Eighteenth Century, IV: Papers Presented at the Fourth David Nichol Smith Memorial Service, Canberra, 1976* (Canberra: Australia National UP, 1976), pp. 31-56.
[250] *Lives*, iv, p. 104.

to the second edition, which echoes the terms of Hill's own preface to his Genesis-inspired poem, *The Creation*.[251] In later versions, Thomson shifts the poem's sublime passages away from the overtly Christian, passionate discourse of Dennis, Watts or Hill towards raptures governed by vaguely deistic theodicy and Opposition patriotism.[252] Nonetheless, the persistence of much of the content if not the ideological focus of the earlier incarnations must be recognized in any reading of the final poem. Due to the accretive composition of *The Seasons*, whereby Thomson not only cut lines, but rewrote, re-ordered and added to his text with every new edition, the final 1746 text represents a complex palimpsest of all the previous versions. Thus, while it attenuates and substantially redeploys the original Miltonic and biblical motifs, it is nonetheless shaped and directed by the original discursive contexts which they bring to it.

The characteristic playfulness of many of Thomson's allusions to the poetry of the past offers another corrective to Steinman's reading. *The Seasons*' depictions of nature repeatedly oscillate between the sublime and less serious modes such as the pastoral and the mock-heroic, and the moral gravity with which Milton's work as a whole had been imbued by eighteenth-century readers like Addison is often countered by the deployment of a rather less reverent tradition of Miltonic imitation. As James Sambrook notes,

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[251] Aaron Hill, *The Creation. A pindaric illustration of a poem, originally written by Moses, on that subject. With a preface to Mr. Pope, Concerning The Sublimity of the Ancient Hebrew Poetry, and a material and obvious Defect in the English.* (1720). For a detailed account of the publication of *Winter* see James Sambrook's 'Introduction' to the *OET* edition of *The Seasons*, pp. xxxiv-xl. What I term the 'first 1726 edition of *Winter*' is the folio edition of 29 April (*Wi.26f* in *OET*) and the second, third, and fourth 1726 editions are variants of the 16 July octavo edition (*Wi.26o*). For Thomson's interactions with Hill, see James Sambrook, *James Thomson, 1700-1748: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 44, and Robert Inglesfield, 'James Thomson, Aaron Hill and the Poetic 'Sublime'', *BJECS*, 13:2 (1990), 215-21 and Gerrard, see reference below.

[252] The poem's shift away from Hillarian poetics is noted in Christine Gerrard, *Aaron Hill: the Muses' Projector, 1685-1750* (Oxford; New York: OUP, 2003), p. 119.

> [t]he lines of Miltonic imitation in the eighteenth-century began with the religious verses of Isaac Watts and the parodies of John Philips; and Thomson, for all his sublimity and gravity, belongs to both lines […] we find a hint of mock epic wherever Miltonic style is applied to creatures far less dignified that Milton's[253]

If Thomson occasionally seems to struggle to separate the two strands, he also makes use of the overlap to rapidly shift focus and tone, or to leave the significance of narrative episodes unresolved.

One 'biblical-Miltonic' passage which survives more or less intact from the first, 1726 text of 'Winter' through to the 1746 *The Seasons* is the thaw scene in lines 988 to 1023, in which '[t]he Rivers swell/ Of bonds impatient'[254] and

> [t]hose sullen Seas,
> That wash th'ungenial Pole, will rest no more,
> Beneath the Shackles of the mighty North;
> But, rousing all their Waves, resistless heave[255]

The chaotic, watery setting, in which natural 'bonds' and 'shackles' are dissolved, also confuses perceptual categories. As in his description of the thunderstorm in 'Summer', Thomson intensifies and enlivens the sublime immensity and power of this scene, and introduces a note of pathos, by placing human 'Wretches', overwhelmed by the horror of violent natural phenomena, at its centre:[256]

> Ill fares the Bark, the Wretches' last Resort,
> That, lost amid the floating Fragments, moors

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[253] 'Introduction', *OET*, p. xxv.
[254] *Winter. A Poem*, 1st ed. (1726), p. 14; 'First edition of *Winter*', *OET*, ll. 330-333. See 1746 text, 'Winter', *OET*, ll. 992-3.
[255] *Winter. A Poem*, 1st ed. (1726), p. 14; 'First edition of *Winter*', *OET*, ll. 337-48. See 1746 text, *OET*, ll. 997-1000. This section of *Winter*, including lines which follow and are discussed below, draws heavily on Ambrose Philips, 'Winter-Piece, to the Earl of Dorset', *Tatler*, 12 (7 May 1709).
[256] The emphasis on the misrecognition of place ('resort') is diminished somewhat in later versions, where 'the Wretches' last resort' becomes 'with trembling Wretches charg'd' (*OET*).

> Beneath the Shelter of an Icy Isle;
> While Night o'erwhelms the Sea, and Horror looks
> More horrible. Can human Hearts endure
> Th'assembled *Mischiefs*, that besiege them round:
> Unlist'ning *Hunger*, fainting *Weariness*,
> The *Roar* of Winds, and Waves, the *Crush* of Ice,
> Now, ceasing, now, renew'd, with louder Rage,
> And bellowing round the Main: Nations remote,
> Shook from their Midnight-Slumbers, deem they hear
> Portentous Thunder, in the troubled Sky. [257]

Just as the thaw causes elemental confusion when water invades both earth and air, so it muddies the distinction between matter and its attributes, between object and subject. The assonance of 'Icy Isle' offers an aural replica of the sailor's confusion of 'iceberg' with 'island' and of danger with shelter. Equally, the melodramatic mid-phrase line-break and alliterative over-determination of 'Horror/ looks more horrible' re-presents the blurring and doubling of terrifying natural phenomena via the body's response to them. Finally, the list of personified but insubstantial '*Mischiefs*' assailing 'human hearts' conflate the sensory data of natural forces and the physical states that render humans insensitive yet, paradoxically, more vulnerable to them, thus increasing nature's threat: '[t]he *Roar* of Wind and Waves' and 'the *Crush* of Ice' are part of the same catalogue as 'unlist'ning *Hunger*' and 'fainting *Weariness*'.

At this climax of natural confusion and sensory distortion, Thomson introduces the ultimate sublime creature, whose activities exaggerate the violence of the storm:

> More to embroil the Deep, Leviathan,
> And his unweildy Train, in horrid Sport,
> Tempest the loosen'd Brine; while, thro' the Gloom,

[257] *Winter. A Poem*, 1st ed. (1726), p. 14, and 'First edition of *Winter*' *OET*, ll. 337-48. See also the 1746 text, 'Winter', in *OET*, ll. 1004-1013. The later version cuts the lines describing the superstitious interpretation of the thaw-storm by 'Nations remote' – perhaps in part to avoid repeating similar episodes in 'Summer' and 'Autumn' (1746).

> Far, from the dire, unhospitable Shore,
> The Lyon's Rage, the Wolf's sad Howl is heard,
> And all the fell Society of Night.
> Yet, *Providence*, that ever-waking *Eye*
> Looks down, with Pity, on the fruitless Toil
> Of Mortals, lost to Hope, and *lights* them safe,
> Thro' all this dreary Labyrinth of Fate.[258]

The leviathan's 'embroiling' motion is echoed by 'fruitless Toil' in the final sentence, which condenses the events of the previous section into a generalized moral sentiment and pans out from the scene of particular providential violence to a more abstract, and thus morally coherent, perspective. The association is not merely aural. '[E]mbroil' here is used in the sense of 'throw into uproar or tumult', but as a noun also describes 'a state of entanglement or confusion' and so lies within the same semantic field as 'toil', which signifies 'to entrap' as well as 'to labour'.[259] The leviathan's 'unweildy train' thus represents a physical, natural analogue of Providence's 'dreary Labyrinth of Fate'.

This parallel between the leviathan and the labyrinth is not fortuitous, and the associated verbs and nouns variously signifying entanglement, confusion, noise and labour are drawn from a venerable literary tradition. The 'leviathan', as we have seen, is a creature that would have been recognized by contemporary readers as a sublime stock character of biblical paraphrase. In fact, Thomson himself wrote a verse paraphrase of Psalm 104 while a student at Edinburgh:

> Even the broad ocean, wherein do abide
> Monsters that flounce upon the boiling tide,
> […]

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[258] *Winter. A Poem*, 1st ed. (1726), pp. 14-15; 'First edition of *Winter*' in *OET* (ll. 349-58). See 1746 'Winter', *OET*, ll. 1014-23. The final, 1746 'Winter' compresses 'The Lyon's rage, the Wolf's sad howl [...] and all the Fell Society of Night' (lion and wolf are found in Ambrose Philips's poem) into 'famished monsters, there awaiting wrecks', which increases the significance of 'leviathan' as the single monstrous creature threatening the sailor.

[259] *OED*, 'embroil, *v.*', definition 2; 'embroil, *n.*', definition 1.a.

> 'Tis there that Leviathan sports and plays
> And spouts his water in the face of day[260]

This early composition displays Thomson's characteristic combination of the sublime and the mock-heroic in his (perhaps unintended) amplification of the faintly comical aspects of the Old Testament Leviathan, i.e. 'flounce', 'sports' and 'plays', and the 'spouting' described as a squirt of water in day's 'face'.[261] However, in 'Winter' the leviathan's sport is made 'horrid' and the mock epic qualities are displaced to other parts of the poem.

Richard Terry's argument, that scenes of natural violence in *The Seasons* – such as the thaw in 'Winter' – illustrate the category of 'natural evil' frequently addressed in contemporary prose theodicy, suggests a rationale for Thomson's retention of them long after biblical paraphrase had gone out of fashion.[262] However, there are other aspects of this particular passage which cohere with the philosophy and poetics of the final text, and an exploration of the allusions to *Paradise Lost* offers more compelling reasons for its survival. The borrowing from Milton is prefigured in the first three lines of the thaw passage, where the lost wretch who 'moors/ Beneath the shelter of an icy isle' is a version of the 'pilot' in *Paradise Lost* who

> Deeming [Leviathan] some island, oft, as seamen tell,
> With fixèd anchor in his scaly rind
> Moors by his side under the lee, while night

[260] 'Psalm 104 Paraphrazed', pp. 234-7 in James Thomson, *Liberty, The Castle of Indolence and Other Poems*, ed. by James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 23-7 (ll. 92-3, 97-8). See 'Commentary' in *OET*, p. 395.
[261] This phrasing, as Sambrook notes, follows Tate and Brady's 1696 'metrical version'; it is also very close in wording to the leviathan passage in Philips's 'Winter-Piece'.
[262] Terry, "Through Nature Shedding Influence Malign': Thomson's the Seasons as a Theodicy'.

> Invests the sea, and wishèd morn delays. [263]

Equally, the 'unweildy train' of Thomson's leviathan recalls Satan's

> other parts [that]
> Prone on the flood, extended long and large
> Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
> As whom the fables name of monstrous size[264]

As noted in the 'Introduction' above, Milton uses the leviathan simile to foreground a number of Satan's attributes, such as his confusion of merely creaturely power and extent with divine might, and his propensity for disguise and deception. By reprising elements of the simile in his winter tempest scene, Thomson re-naturalizes the epic machinery of *Paradise Lost* and incorporates the satanic into the prospects and processes of fallen nature. Similarly, the satanic lexis of error and deviation that Milton develops in his poem are associated in 'Winter' with leviathan's natural amplification of the phenomena which produce the sailors' confusion and mistake. By drawing on *Paradise Lost* to make a 'merely' literary or poetic association between a particular scene and the general providential frame of the Fall which informs the 'labyrinth of Fate', Thomson dispenses with overt theodicean exegesis while retaining a suggestion of exemplarity. As per Dennis's prescriptions in *Advancement and Reformation*, the work's 'Poetical Art'

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[263] *PL*, I. 204-8. Note Milton's aural representation of the visual similitude between island and leviathan (or whale) by the homophony of 'island'/'rind', which Thomson imitates and intensifies in 'icy isle'. Griffin briefly notes the echo but does not dwell on its implications: Griffin, *Regaining Paradise*, pp. 190-1.

[264] *PL*, I. 194-7.

bridges the gap between the 'Regularity' of Divine Providence and its 'Seeming Irregularity' from a human perspective.[265]

However, the association made in *Winter* between leviathan and labyrinth also points us to other passages in *Paradise Lost*, producing a still more complex set of literary resonances. Ingrid Horrocks notes that '*The Seasons*' frequent recurrence to "mazes" echoes and evokes the hell of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, where the fallen angels' thoughts are similarly "in wand'ring mazes lost"'.[266] But the labyrinth is also a figure for Satan himself, and as such infects the pastoral landscape of Eden at the moment of the Fall. In 'The Art of the Maze' Katherine Swaim shows how, in *Paradise Lost*, mazes are associated with Satan, and form a 'very skilfully manipulated physical, spatial, verbal, intellectual, and spiritual pattern' within the poem, testifying at once to the sophistry of Satan's speech, which we are to reject, and, implicitly, to the art of the poet.[267] Thus, in Book IX, maze motifs are used to describe the undulating figure of the serpent, and characterizations of Satan from earlier in the poem are invoked in a new context:

> the enemy of mankind, enclosed
> In serpent, inmate bad […] toward Eve
> Addressed his way, not with indented wave,
> Prone on the ground, as since, but on his rear,
> Circular base of rising folds, that towered
> Fold above fold a surging maze, his head
> Crested aloft, and carbuncle his eyes;
> With burnished neck of verdant gold, erect
> Amidst his circling spires, that on the grass

[265] John Dennis, 'The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry', in *Critical Works*, i, pp. 197-278 (p. 202).
[266] Horrocks, "Circling Eye' and 'Houseless Stranger': The New Eighteenth-Century Wanderer (Thomson to Goldsmith)', p. 685. As has long been recognized, in *Paradise Lost* Milton explores the moral implications of Satan's 'error' by developing a related lexis of 'wandering' which uses the notion of the mistaken, tortuous or indirect path as a dramatic correlative of moral deviation; 'labyrinth' and 'maze' are key terms in this lexis.
[267] Kathleen M. Swaim, 'The Art of the Maze in Book IX of Paradise Lost', *SEL*, 12 (1972), 129-40 (p. 129).

Floated redundant[268]

The details of the mazy serpent refer us back to the leviathan passage in Book I. Whereas Satan in Hell has only his 'head uplift' while 'his other parts besides' lie 'prone on the flood, extended' like Leviathan (I, 193-5), the serpent here moves 'aloft'. Nevertheless, the watery element of the leviathan is suggested by 'floating redundant'[269] and here, as with the fallen angels of Book I, Milton makes an association between the maze or labyrinth, and the creature of monstrous dimensions (the serpent 'towers').

A further layer of allusion emphasizes the significance of Thomson's echo of the depictions of Satan as both monstrous leviathan and delusive maze. Alastair Fowler notes that in the lines quoted above, Milton combines 'two symbols of error (monster and labyrinth)' which are 'juxtaposed' in Book I of the *The Faerie Queene*.[270] In a sense, though, these two symbols are not so much opposed as intertwined: the tail of monstrous Errour, who dwells in the 'wandring wood' where Una and Redcrosse 'stray', replicates the 'turns' of the labyrinth: '[h]er huge long taile her den all ouerspred,/ Yet was in knots and many boughtes vpwound'.[271] Thus like Satan in the serpent, Errour herself describes the 'knots' of a labyrinth. Spenser elaborates the associations throughout the first book; A. C. Hamilton notes that Duessa's 'crafty cunning traine' in Canto seven (where 'traine' signifies 'guile') links her to Errour, to Lucifera's Dragon 'with an hideous trayne', and

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[268] *PL*, IX. 495-504. See also Satan's search for and discovery of the serpent, 'in whose mazy folds' (l. 161) he intends to hide; 'him fast sleeping soon he found/ In labyrinth of many a round self-rolled,/ His head the midst, well stored with subtle wiles' (ll. 183-5).

[269] Where 'redundant' carries the meaning of 'wavelike' (IX. 504n).

[270] *PL*, IX. 496-504n.

[271] *FQ*, I. 1. 3, 15. From 1502 on, 'knot' can describe 'a flower-bed laid out in a fanciful or intricate design' (*OED*, definition 7), which provides another semantic link to Errour's labyrinth. See for instance Thomas Hill, *The gardeners labyrinth: Containing a discovrse of the gardeners life, in the yearly trauels to be bestowed on his plot of earth, for the vse of a garden: with instructions* […] *wherein are set forth diuers herbers, knots, and mazes cunningly handled for the beautifying of gardens* […] (London: Printed by H. Ballard, 1608); many of the designs for 'knots' resemble mazes.

to the procession of sins in Canto four.[272] Although in *The Seasons* Spenser is a less ubiquitous source than Milton, the mid eighteenth-century fashion for mock-Spenserian poetry and Thomson's familiarity with Spenser as evinced by *The Castle of Indolence* (1748), suggests that the confluence of the two sources is one he would have been aware of.[273]

In surveying two precedents for Thomson's association of 'leviathan' and 'labyrinth' or 'maze', I have aimed to show how sublime manifestations of natural violence in *The Seasons* activate a specifically poetic lexis, infusing the poem with a rich allegorical and symbolical heritage. Not only do these terms function as leitmotifs of the sublime, they also offer us a way of understanding how the poem connects particular destructive providential acts with the 'plan' of general providence. The use of what Swaim calls 'maze words' in successive editions of *Winter*, for example, extends and elaborates the notions of providential order already discussed. In the first edition, the adjectival form, 'mazy', is invoked as snow falls and obscures or confuses the landscape:

> LO! from the livid East, or piercing North,
> Thick Clouds ascend, in whose capacious Womb,
> A vapoury Deluge lies, to Snow congeal'd:
> Heavy, they roll their fleecy World along;
> And the Sky saddens with th'impending Storm.
> Thro' the hush'd Air, the whitening Shower descends,

[272] *FQ*, I. 7. 1n. Spenser also devotes five lines to the sacrilegious pride of Orgoglio's monster's tail:

> His tayle was stretched out in wondrous length,
> That to the hous of heuenly gods it raught,
> And with extorted powre, and borrow'd strength,
> The euer burning lamps from thence it braught,
> And prowdly threw to ground, as things of naught.
> (I. 7. 18)

[273] Mazes also appear in *The Castle of Indolence*, e.g. 'the warbling Maze/ Of the wild Brooks' (*Liberty, the Castle of Indolence and Other Poems*, pp. 161-223, I. xlviii). Similar river mazes in *The Seasons* are discussed below.

> At first, thin-wavering; till, at last, the Flakes
> Fall broad, and wide, and fast, dimming the Day,
> With a continual Flow. See! sudden, hoar'd,
> The Woods beneath the stainless Burthen bow,
> Blackning, along the mazy Stream it melts;
> Earth's universal Face, deep-hid, and chill,
> Is all one, dazzling, Waste.[274]

Like the thaw scene, this is a paradigmatic instance of the sensory 'unworlding' Shaun Irlam describes as the first stage of prophetic (re)inscription: the 'Earth's universal Face' is 'deep-hid'.[275] Despite investing the landscape with the sensory vacancy of a 'dazzling Waste', however, the narrator commands the reader to 'See!' This imperative points us to both the careful poetic mimicry which represents the process of 'whitening' and to the single remaining trace on the landscape: the 'mazy Stream', the pattern of which persists despite the snow and offers a visible, apprehensible sign of the sublimely intricate 'Labyrinth of Fate', what Thomson in the second edition of 'Winter calls 'th'Eternal *Scheme*,/ That Dark Perplexity, that Mystic Maze,/ Which Sight cou'd never trace, nor Heart conceive'.[276] The mazy stream is an artful, regular representation of what is divinely created and, to the human eye and mind, irregular to the point of incomprehensibility.

Equally, Milton's mazes connect the physical with the psychological. Swaim shows how, in *Paradise Lost*, '[*m*]*aze* (as labyrinth with classical backgrounds) is played against *amazement* (becoming lost in the complexity of delusive experience)', both of

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[274] 'Winter', 1st edn (1726), p. 10; 'First edition of *Winter*', ll. 216-28.
[275] See 'Vatic Tremors: Unworlding and Otherworldliness in James Thomson's *The Seasons*', in Shaun Irlam, *Elations: The Poetics of Enthusiasm in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1999), pp. 113-141.
[276] *Winter*, 2nd edition (1726), p. 55.

which are associated with Satan.[277] Surveying the existing senses of the two terms she concludes that 'from well before Milton's time both *maze* and *labyrinth* carried abstract or psychological as well as concrete meanings', signifying both 'a physical and spatial form and a process imposed upon or received by the intellectual faculty'.[278] Like Milton, Thomson uses both these meanings. In the 1730 text of 'Winter', 'amazing' is used as a descriptor in lines that repeat the snow-scene above as part of the excursion to the poles and, once again, associate part and whole by means of art:

> Snows swell on snows amazing to the sky;
> And icy mountains there, on mountains pil'd,
> Seem to the shivering sailor from afar,
> Shapeless, and white, an atmosphere of clouds.
> Projected huge, and horrid, o'er the main,
> Alps frown on Alps; or rushing hideous down,
> As if old Chaos was again return'd,
> Shake the firm pole, and make an ocean boil.[279]

Clearly, this scene reprises and intensifies the various winter amazements seen in earlier editions. In contrast to the static state of 'amazement' that characterizes Celadon, the adjectival or adverbial form, 'amazing', represents the notion of confusing, complicating *effect*. Here too, 'doublings' ('Snows swell on snows', mountains are 'pil'd' on mountains, and 'Alps frown on Alps') distort perception and initiate delusion or fantasy (indicated by 'seem' and 'as if'), so that the icebergs appear as clouds and their collapse

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[277] Swaim, 'The Art of the Maze in Book IX of Paradise Lost', p. 129. Among the definitions of 'maze' which she notes are: 'lost in thought'; 'vanity, a delusive fancy, and a trick or deception'; 'a state of bewilderment'; '[a]s a noun', it can signify 'a design [more] than a construction, and notably in uses dating from 1610-1742 signifies a winding movement or dance', although 'for the English a maze is generally a garden structure built of thick hedges'; '[a]s a verb the primary meaning [...] is to stupefy, daze, or put out of one's wits, with secondary meanings of [...] to wander in mind [...]; to bewilder, perplex, confuse [...]; to move in a mazy track [...]; and to involve in a maze of intricate windings'. For 'labyrinth' she notes that as well as describing a 'structure', it may also signify 'a tortuous, entangled, or inextricable condition of things' (ibid.).
[278] Ibid., pp. 132-4.
[279] 'Winter' *1730*, ll. 751-758.

into the sea resembles apocalyptic chaos at Judgement Day. 'Amazing' as participle thus also evokes the wider confusion experienced *and* created when humans seek to understand 'the Labyrinth of Fate'.

(ii) Classical labyrinths

In *Winter*, then, maze words function both as descriptive epithets of events and scenes of natural violence, and as adjectival participles describing the effects of such events and scenes on those who experience and view them. However, whereas the Miltonic and Spenserian sources discussed above generally evoke the maze (and the leviathan) negatively, especially in *Paradise Lost*, where it is so closely associated with Satan, in *The Seasons* maze words are not just applied to the postlapsarian, sublunary equivalent of the satanic, that is, to phenomena of 'natural evil'. They are also invoked in several places to describe the lush confusion of 'Spring'. Wishing to escape from the city, the narrator describes the sensory abundance of the countryside which turns the landscape into a labyrinth:

> Now from the Town,
> Buried in Smoak, and Sleep, and noisome Damps,
> Oft let me wander o'er the dewy Fields,
> Where Freshness breathes, and dash the trembling Drops
> From the bent Bush, as thro' the fuming Maze
> Of Sweet-Briar Hedges I pursue my Walk[280]

Similarly, in the much-discussed passage which follows the 'dynamic' catalogue of Spring flowers, the ubiquitous, excursive Thomsonian 'Eye' replicates the earlier, imagined wander through the 'fuming Maze':

[280] 'Spring' (1728), p. 7; see 'Spring', *OET*, ll. 101-106. In the latter, 1746 version, 'fuming' is replaced by 'verdant'.

> AT length the finish'd Garden to the View
> It's Vistas opens, and it's Alleys green.
> Snatch'd thro' the verdant Maze, the hurried Eye
> Distracted wanders[281]

Once again, the repeated use of maze words in these passages draws the reader's attention to the pattern of repetitions and parallels developed through the poem. As in 'Winter', it also allows Thomson to poetically make (rather than explicitly draw) a synecdochic connection between particular scenes and general providence:

> Inspiring *GOD!* who boundless Spirit all,
> And unremitting Energy, pervades,
> Subsists, adjusts, and agitates the Whole.
> He ceaseless works alone, and yet alone
> Seems not to work, so exquisitely fram'd
> Is this complex, amazing Scene of Things.[282]

Thus, the opposed moods of 'Winter' and 'Spring' are incorporated into similarly labyrinthine patterns of maze words or figures to suggest rather than to assert the relation of providential part to whole.

Elsewhere in 'Spring' mazes characterize the mock-heroic antics of creatures whose 'sport' or 'play' resembles that of the leviathan in Thomson's paraphrase even while it alludes to the descriptions of animals in *Georgics* III. In the 'courtship of the beasts' section, the insertion of a maze-word turns Virgil's love-sick bull who must 'wander in the Wood' into a comical Spenserian knight-errant who 'thro' the *mazy* Wood/ Dejected wanders […] wrapt in mad Imagination' (my emphasis) and 'idly

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[281] *Spring* (1728), p. 26; see 'Spring', *OET*, ll. 516-19.
[282] *Spring* (1728), p. 43. See 'Spring', *OET*, ll. 852-58, which changes 'amazing Scene' to 'stupdendous Scheme'. The fact that Thomson, on multiple occasions, describes providential order as maze-like suggests the extent to which his prophetic or visionary 'eye' keeps within the bounds of the mortal and natural.

butting feigns/ A Rival gor'd in every knotty Trunk'.[283] This modulation of maze-words, which allows Thomson to shift between dangerous, sublime mazes and pleasurable or playful ones, is qualitatively different to the way in which Milton uses them.

In fact, the 'mazy wood' offers a closely-woven 'knot' of pretexts, suggesting not only the forests of the *Faerie Queene* or the bowers of Eden, but two more likely literary sources: the accounts of the Cretan labyrinth built to conceal the Minotaur, a monstrous cross between bull and man, in the epics of Virgil and Ovid. These two poets are significant presences from the very start of *The Seasons*' composition, in the epigraphs to the first edition of 'Winter', which are taken from the *Metamorphoses* and the *Georgics*.[284] In what follows I argue that Virgil's labyrinth and Ovid's response to it form a diptych of contrasting maze-associations within the many versions of *The Seasons*. In Virgil the labyrinthine associates artistry and effort, and develops the lexis of *error*, that is, of mistaking and wandering, which informs *Paradise Lost*. Ovid's response to and rejection of Virgil's laborious labyrinth instead represents playful, intricate and eloquent mazes in ways that subsume the Virgilian emphases on effort and displacement into an image of the poet as consummate artificer.[285]

Of course, as is clear from the example of the wandering bull in *Spring*, it is impossible to speak of Virgilian allusion in *The Seasons* without acknowledging the significance of the *Georgics*, itself widely recognized as a notably allusive poem. Nonetheless, Thomson also makes reference to Virgil's other works and he would

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[283] *Georgics* III. 329, in John Dryden, *Poems: The Works of Virgil in English, 1697*, ed. by William Frost, vol. 5 of 20, *The Works of John Dryden* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1987). 'Spring', *OET* , ll. 796-7.

[284] 'Winter', *OET*, see note p. 203 and in 'Commentary', p. 381.

[285] Although Milton's response to Ovid is widely viewed as negative, Sarah Annes Brown argues that Milton's 'anxiety' and ambivalence in relation to Ovidian (a)morality leaves significant traces in *Paradise Lost*. Sarah Annes Brown, *The Metamorphosis of Ovid: From Chaucer to Ted Hughes* (London: Duckworth, 1999), p. 124.

undoubtedly have known that in the *Aeneid* Virgil refers explicitly to the myth of Dædalus, the master-craftsman who designed the labyrinth.[286] In her study of the figure of the labyrinth in literary texts Penelope Reed Doob notes that Virgil's *Aeneid* 'includes explicit images of the maze and references to its myth,[287] employs a labyrinthine narrative structure, and embodies themes associated with the idea of the labyrinth', so that the labyrinth '[provides] a structural pattern and thematic leitmotif'.[288] In the *Aeneid*'s labyrinths, celebration of narrative artistry is bound up with a set of more ambiguously-valued qualities which, transferred to *The Seasons*, to a certain extent simply amplify the Miltonic associations of wandering and straying. Drawing on numerous passages from every part of the poem, Doob argues that '[t]he *labor* and *error* associated with mazes are repeatedly emphasized in the *Aeneid*', with both terms taking on multiple meanings and values. Similarly, she notes that *error* 'as circuitous wandering or as mental misjudgement' is a central theme of the poem, as Aeneas 'traces and retraces' his steps on his circuitous route to Rome. By the repetition of narrative and descriptive motifs 'the text covertly establishes the image of the labyrinth: *labor* through blind *error*, a seemingly endless search for a clear path to the perpetually deferred goal of *requies* after *labor*'.[289] Elsewhere, the positive association of the Dædalian labyrinth with artistic and poetic skill is further shadowed by passages which associate the labyrinth with trickery, imprisonment and war.[290]

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[286] See Sambrook, *OET*, p. 405.
[287] Namely in Book Five's extended simile describing the intricate movement of horses at Anchises' funeral games and, crucially, in the ekphrasis in Book Six, which describes the labyrinth depicted on the decorated doors to the temple of Apollo at Cumæ, built by Dædalus after his safe flight from Crete.
[288] Doob, pp. 227-28.
[289] Doob, p. 228.
[290] See Doob, pp. 237-242.

The effort and suffering induced by the Virgilian labyrinth reminds us that Virgilian *labor* is not confined to the *Georgics*. Furthermore, it might usefully be considered as a classical alternative to the theodicean interpretation of the toiling wretches in 'Winter' (quoted above), one that sits alongside the undoubted Christian framework. This perspective illumines Thomson's characterizations of 'amazing' phenomena as scenes or occasions of unrewarding labour, such as the shepherd lost in the snow storm or 'Summer''s equatorial storm, where a tyrannous 'Horror reigns', the sun is 'oppress'd', and night and day 'struggl[e]' against '[a]mazing Clouds on Clouds'.[291] Equally, the labyrinth as winding, complex and extensive path, and erring as mistaken or digressive journeying (represented by Aeneas wandering across the Mediterranean) is important to Thomson's poem as a whole.[292] Wide-ranging, geographically extensive wandering of the kind found in the *Aeneid* is particularly significant in the two seasons of extremes, since in both Thomson inserts 'excursions' to exotic, distant regions of the globe – in 'Winter' to the poles and in 'Summer' to the equator, a journey announced as well-nigh epic flight: 'Now come, bold *Fancy*, spread a daring Flight,/ And view the Wonders of the *torrid Zone*:/Climes unrelenting!'[293] Doob likewise argues for 'a labyrinthine reading' of the *Aeneid* on the basis that Dædalus's maze also inflects the epic's style.[294] Although its sinister function is alluded to, notions of skill and

[291] 'Summer', *OET*, ll. 785, 787, 791. For non-fictional prose sources for these sections see Chapter 4 'Distant Climes' in Alan D. McKillop, *The Background of Thomson's Seasons*, pp. 129-174. The geopolitical, 'imperialist' resonances of 'Summer''s representation of despotic tropics are discussed in Shaun Irlam, 'Gerrymandered Geographies: Exoticism in Thomson and Chateaubriand', *MLN*, 108:5 (1993), 891-912 and Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire*, pp. 153-59.
[292] On the figure of the wanderer in *The Seasons* see Ingrid Horrocks, "Circling Eye' and 'Houseless Stranger': The New Eighteenth-Century Wanderer (Thomson to Goldsmith)', see above, p. 124, footnote 233, for full reference.
[293] 'Summer', in *OET*, ll. 631-33.
[294] Doob, p. 237.

complexity are more striking, especially in the figure of Dædalus himself.[295] Furthermore, '[t]he Daedalus-artist-labyrinth-Apollo conjunction' prefigures 'later associations of Daedalian art and labyrinths with poetry or rhetoric'; such associations play a role in Thomson's poem, and, it will be seen, become particularly significant in 'Autumn'.[296]

The other important account of the labyrinth in classical Latin poetry, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, develops a slightly different set of associations. In 'Daedalus in the Labyrinth' Barbara Pavlock notes that, like Virgil in Book 6 of the *Aeneid*, 'Ovid gives special prominence to the archetypal artisan Daedalus'; unlike Virgil he narrates the myth in full.[297] For Pavlock the 'most elaborate of the descriptions of Daedalus' signal invention take the form of an extended simile', in which '[t]he poet illustrates the windings of the labyrinth through an analogy with the river Maeander'.[298] She also argues that by 'using the word *lapsus* in the Maeander simile, his analogue for the labyrinth, Ovid associates the winding structure closely with the verb *labor* , "to glide"', which she suggests 'shows […] that he was aware of Vergil's wordplay with the labyrinth' in the ekphrasis of the *Aeneid*.[299] The meandering Ovidian labyrinth defines itself in opposition to the Virgilian, and instead of representing the 'grueling labors' of epic adventure and art emphasizes 'fluid structure', poetic 'play' or *lusus* and 'fluid, smooth style' suggested by the adjective *liquidus* which describes the river's waves.[300] Ovid's *lusus* is thus particularly interesting in its dimensions of literary play, invention

[295] Ibid., pp. 30-31.
[296] Ibid., p. 32.
[297] Barbara Pavlock, 'Daedalus in the Labyrinth of Ovid's Metamorphoses', *Classical World*, 92:2 (1998), 141-57, (p. 138).
[298] Pavlock, p. 138.
[299] Ibid., p. 141.
[300] Ibid., p. 139.

and reinvention, as suggested by the associated verb, *alludere*, 'to play with, joke or jest at, dally with, touch lightly upon a subject'.[301] These 'strategies' not only allow Ovid to boast of surpassing Virgil but also to extend the range of epic, allowing it to incorporate 'light subjects not normally included in traditional epic' and to parody 'more serious subject matter'.[302]

The association in *Metamorphoses* of labyrinth and river partly explains the startling frequency with which maze-words appear in *The Seasons*' many descriptions of rivers, such as the 'mazy Stream' which melts and blackens the white snow into a visible, legible line in the first edition of 'Winter'.[303] In certain passages, Thomson even seems to replicate details of the Mæander simile. Since it is important to my discussion of *The Seasons*, I quote it in full, albeit in Samuel Croxall's English translation:

> Great *Dædalus* of *Athens* was the Man
> That made the Draught, and form'd the wondrous Plan;
> Where Rooms within themselves encircled lye,
> With various Windings, to deceive the Eye.
> As soft *Mæander*'s wanton Current plays,
> When thro' the *Phrygian* Fields it loosely strays;
> Backward, and forward rould the dimpl'd Tide,
> Seeming, at once, two different Ways to glide:
> While circling Streams their former Banks survey,
> And Waters past succeeding Waters see:
> Now floating to the Sea with downward Course,
> Now pointing upward to its ancient Source,
> Such was the Work, so intricate the Place,

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[301] 'allude, *v.*', in *OED*.
[302] Pavlock, p. 139.
[303] 'Winter', 1st edn (1726), p. 10; 'First edition of *Winter*', l. 226. Zoë Kinsley notes that in *The Seasons* the 'organic structural image' of the river function as both 'poetic [device]' and an 'active [agent]' 'by which Thomson orders the objects of his description'. However, Kinsley does not explore the poetic precedents on which Thomson draws, and while considering the poem as 'descriptive', does not engage with the ways in which he self-consciously dramatizes his poetic utterance of its many scenes and prospects. The rivers that appear in *The Seasons* have a distinctive 'song', and rather than merely offering a structural image by which to map the poem's natural spaces and processes, they encode a cluster of allusive motifs that embed the natural within the poetic. Kinsley, 'Landscapes 'Dynamically' in Motion': Revisiting Issues of Structure and Agency in Thomson's the Seasons', p. 6.

> That scarce the Workman all its Turns cou'd trace;
> And *Dædalus* was puzzled how to find
> The secret Ways of what himself design'd.[304]

This version appears in Samuel Garth's 1717 edition of episodes from the *Metamorphoses* 'translated by the most eminent hands'. In his 'Preface', Garth singles out the Mæander passage for its 'ill-judged Superfluity' (vii), but despite his suggestion that the passage should be cropped and regularized, the English version retains the original's effects of self-division, repetition and doubling, and it resembles many of *The Seasons*' maze passages.[305]

For instance, Croxall's translation seems to inform the association between maze and river in the instructions to the angler in 'Spring':

> High to their Fount, this Day, amid the Hills,
> And Woodlands warbling round, trace up the Brooks;
> The Next, pursue their rocky-channel'd Maze,
> Down to the River, in whose ample Wave
> Their little Naiads love to sport at large.
> Just in the dubious Point, where with the Pool
> Is mix'd the trembling Stream, or where it boils
> Around the Stone, or from the hollow'd Bank,
> Reverted, plays in undulating Flow,
> There throw, nice-judging, the delusive Fly[306]

The tone of light-hearted didacticism is amplified via allusion to *Metamorphoses*, which adds a fanciful, fabulous dimension to the description of the 'art' of fishing, figuring it as a kind of mock-epic *labor* which partakes of Ovidian *lusus* and metamorphosis. As in *Metamorphoses* the lines describing the river depict it doubling back on itself as it circles

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[304] Garth, ed., *Ovid's Metamorphoses in Fifteen Books. Translated by the most Eminent Hands*, p. 261.
[305] Of the passages already discussed, see for e.g. the 'Clouds on Clouds' in l. 791 of 'Summer', and 'Snows swell on Snows' in l. 651 of 'Winter', *OET*.
[306] 'Spring', *OET*, ll. 399-409. This replicates elements of the angling scene in Pope's *Windsor Forest* (ll. 135-146), but the maze words, personifications, Ovidian reference and Miltonic diction are Thomson's additions [this and future references to *Windsor Forest* are to the text in *TE*, I, pp. 145-194].

'from the [...] Bank/reverted', and multiply the stream (as brooks). Like Croxall, Thomson employs a latinate-Miltonic vocabulary of *error* ('sport', 'dubious', 'reverted', 'undulating', 'delusive', 'play'), albeit in a more obviously playful manner. The angler, by following the river and its tributaries, is figuratively metamorphosed into a river-god as his path replicates its 'reversion', first 'trac[ing] up the Brooks' and then 'pursuing' them 'down to the River'. Similarly, the naiads who 'sport' in the river's 'ample Wave' suggest the angler's actual prey, 'the finny race'.[307] Thus Ovidian allusion transforms the angler's crafty hunt for fish into a type of amorous pursuit, like that of the river-god Alpheus who in Book V of *Metamorphoses* chases the nymph Arethusa until she herself is transformed into a water-course.

In 'Summer', the course of the Nile is likewise associated with mazes, and similarly multiplies and personifies the river. Like Croxall's Mæander it 'rolls', and replicates the river's twists and turns in an exaggeratedly long sentence with concatenated syntax that coils across ten lines:

> From his [Nile's] two Springs, in *Gojam*'s sunny Realm,
> Pure-welling out, he thro' the lucid Lake
> Of fair *Dambea* rolls his Infant-Stream.
> There, by the Naiads nurs'd, he sports away
> His playful Youth, amid the fragrant Isles,
> That with unfading Verdure smile around.
> Ambitious, thence the manly River breaks;
> And gathering many a Flood, and copious fed
> With all the mellow'd Treasures of the Sky,
> Winds in progressive Majesty along:
> Thro' splendid Kingdoms now devolves his Maze,
> Now wanders wild o'er solitary Tracts
> Of Life-deserted Sand; till, glad to quit
> The joyless Desart, down the *Nubian* Rocks
> From thundering Steep to Steep, he pours his Urn,

[307] 'Spring', *OET*, l. 395. For Thomson's use of periphrasis see Sambrook's *OET* 'Commentary', p. 328.

> And *Egypt* joys beneath the spreading Wave.[308]

The phrase 'devolves his Maze' is reprised at the start of 'Autumn'. After a brief announcement of the pastoral theme of this new song ('the Doric reed once more/Well-pleased I tune'[309]) the poem invokes Arthur Onslow, Speaker of the House of Commons, in the appropriately 'duplicating' role of the Muse's muse:

> ONSLOW! the Muse, ambitious of thy Name,
> To grace, inspire, and dignify her Song,
> Would from the *Public Voice* thy gentle Ear
> A while engage. Thy noble Cares she knows,
> The Patriot-Virtues that distend thy Thought,
> Spread on thy Front, and in thy Bosom glow;
> While listening Senates hang upon thy Tongue,
> Devolving through the Maze of Eloquence
> A Rowl of Periods, sweeter than her Song.
> But she too pants for public Virtue; she,
> Tho' weak of Power, yet strong in ardent Will,
> Whene'er her Country rushes on her Heart,
> Assumes a bolder Note, and fondly tries
> To mix the Patriot's with the Poet's Flame.[310]

Here, the song which is to describe 'Autumn' borrows a maze-like voice associated with rhetoric, repeating a phrase from 'Winter', 'the maze of eloquence'.[311] However, by also echoing the Nile's rolls, the voice is transformed from the authoritative, Virgilian labyrinth of public, imperial rhetoric to the Muse's poetic one, liquid and fluvial – which might be thought of as Ovidian.

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[308] 'Summer' (1742), ll. 792-810. As for the angling scene, the description of the Nile and other exotic rivers draws on *Windsor Forest* (ll. 329-376). Again, the maze is Thomson's addition.
[309] 'Autumn', *OET*, ll. 3-4.
[310] Ibid., ll. 9-22.
[311] 'Winter', *OET*, ll. 668-9.

The discussion so far shows that the maze offers Thomson a poetic trope and a narrative and structural model which is historically imbued with complex literary resonances. These not only provide an alternative means of depicting and discussing providential order, but allow Thomson to cover a wide range of topics with great generic and tonal variety while sustaining the consistent and characteristic 'voice' or 'song' which Steinman identifies as crucial to the poem. *The Seasons*'s mazes thus represent sites at which the poet's allusive voice, echoing and elaborating the poetry of the past, intersects with the structural problem of relating part to whole in verse or theodicy, and of modulating between grave error and playful pleasure.

(iii) The maze of 'Autumn'

As the invocation to Onslow suggests, 'Autumn', more than in any other part of the poem, develops the figuration of eloquence as maze-like into a central trope and topic, providing an imaginative bridge between song and landscape. The last 'Season' to be composed, it collects and concentrates the scattered maze-references of the earlier sections and most clearly and elaborately develops the poetic and landscape precedents both in classical and vernacular literature. In the final text the 'Argument' includes 'a digression, inquiring into the rise of rivers'; as noted earlier, digressions in general were associated with labyrinths, as were rivers in the Ovidian tradition.[312] Related words occur much more often in 'Autumn' than in any of the three other 'Seasons': the 1746 text uses 'maze' seven times, 'mazy' and 'labyrinth' twice each and 'amaz'd' once. Furthermore, Thomson explicitly characterizes the season itself as a maze:

[312] This refers to the magnificent lines on the workings of 'the vast eternal Springs' ('Autumn', *OET*, ll. 773-835) of the water cycle, which wind through 'mazy-running Clefts' and are mediated by the visionary poet who 'sees' the hidden streams.

> HENCE from the busy, Joy-resounding Fields,
> In chearful Error, let us tread the Maze
> Of *Autumn*, unconfin'd; and taste, reviv'd
> The Breath of Orchard big with bending Fruit.
> Obedient to the Breeze and beating Ray,
> From the deep-loaded Bough a mellow Shower,
> Incessant melts away. The juicy Pear
> Lies, in a soft Profusion, scattered round.
> A various Sweetness swells the gentle Race;
> By Nature's all-refining Hand prepar'd,
> Of temper'd Sun, and Water, Earth, and Air,
> In ever-changing Composition mixt.[313]

In the above lines, the incongruous conjunction of 'cheerful error' signals the contraction of Virgil's epic *error* or wandering to the sphere of the domestic and the pastoral or low-georgic. Equally, the serious exploration of error and obedience in *Paradise Lost* is reworked in a lighter scene where fruit, unlike the first couple, obey the dictates of divine nature.[314] Again, the *lusus* of *Metamorphoses* underwrites this maze, a context suggested by the invocation of 'Pomona' in the lines that follow, as well as by the 'mellow shower' of pears which undergoes a form of metamorphosis when it '[i]ncessant melts away'.[315] Thus 'Nature's hand' skilfully works poetic *and* elemental mixture and increase, offering a playful, self-reflexive commentary on the prosodic artistry which isolates 'revived' between a comma and a line-break to multiply the sense of 'taste, revived/ The breath of orchard big with bending fruit' so that it suggests not only the revival of the celebrants by the consumption of fruit, but also the 'revival' of their sense of 'taste' by the flavours, and the 'revival' of the orchard's 'breath' or scent as the fruit's juice is released on the

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[313] 'Autumn', *OET*, ll. 625-636. All future references to 'Autumn' will be to this text.
[314] These fruits are also pointedly unlike those in Spenser's sinister 'bowr of blisse', which 'seemd to entice/ All passers by, to taste their lushious wine/ And did them selues into their hands incline,/ As freely offering to be gathered', *FQ*, II. 7. 54.
[315] See also Pope's translation of the Pomona episode, and his allusion to it in *Windsor Forest*, l. 37. On the other hand, Thomson calls John Philips '*Pomona*'s Bard' ('Autumn', l. 645), which places his work in a slightly different poetic tradition.

palate. The intensive alliteration of line 628 helps to suggest other revivals: the poet 'revives' the orchard by personification (it breathes, bends and is 'big with fruit', thus also promising a new generation of trees), extends the alliteration into a second line (629), and, by his skilled mimesis, revives the reader's literary taste – as Johnson put it, '[t]he reader of the *Seasons* wonders that he never saw before what Thomson shows him, and that he never yet has felt what Thomson impresses'.[316]

Despite this playfulness, the invocation to Onslow simultaneously stages 'Autumn' as a public and patriotic poem, and Thomson becomes the equivalent of Speaker in the realm of poetry. The party-political implications of this are hard to judge. The type of political stance Thomson might be taking in *The Seasons* as a whole has been widely debated, and in addition to scholarship exploring the poem's more broadly ideological biases,[317] Christine Gerrard's influential study of the Patriot opposition to Walpole is used by Glynis Ridley to consider Thomson's work in her discussion of the Opposition movement's appropriation of terms like 'virtue' and 'benevolence', while Philip Connell adds clarity to the picture by distinguishing between Thomson's Whig loyalties in the earlier, 1730 text and those expressed in the final version.[318] The invocation itself is a mixture of the serious and the comical, the celebratory and the ironic. It follows conventional formulae, but exaggerates the usual modest avowals of weakness and characterizes its muse particularly clearly. Thomson's 'panting' muse, wilful yet weak, overwhelmed by 'country' and 'fondly' attempting a patriotic note, is

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[316] Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, iv, p. 104.
[317] See Barrell and Fulford, above.
[318] Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford: OUP, 1994); for Thomson's political views see pp. 29-40, 55. Glynis Ridley, '*The Seasons* and the Politics of Opposition', in Terry, ed., *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary*, pp. 93-116; Philip Connell, 'Newtonian Physico-Theology and the Varieties of Whiggism in James Thomson's The Seasons', *Huntington Library Quarterly: Studies in English and American History and Literature,* 72:1 (2009), 1-28.

rather less dignified than Onslow, yet her elaborate wanderings in the poem suggest the maze-like artifice, perhaps even deceit, of political rhetoric. This overtly poetic blend, which can be characterized as one of Virgilian *labor* and Ovidian imitation and subversion of it, persists throughout the poem and seems to complicate Thomson's more explicit statements of ideological and party-political affiliation.[319]

In this context, *Windsor-Forest* offers Thomson an influential model for the poetic celebration of British government. Pope's 1713 poem is a key source for the *Seasons*, providing many of the episodes and descriptions of 'Autumn', as well as prefiguring the constellation of earlier sources on which Thomson draws across the whole poem. Thus Pat Rogers identifies the *Georgics* and the *Metamorphoses,* the poems which provide the epigraphs to *Winter* (1726), as the two key classical literary sources for *Windsor Forest*, and cites Spenser, Milton and Addison as the main modern pre-texts.[320] There are, however, important differences. Although Pope precedes Thomson in echoing modern translations of Ovid, including his own, he would not have had access to Croxall's translation of the Dædalus myth, which only appeared in 1717.[321] Perhaps partly as a result of this, none of the many rivers in *Windsor Forest* are described in terms of mazes (maze words in general appearing merely incidentally in the poem).[322] Pope's Thames draws rather on Virgil's personification of the Tiber in the *Aeneid* and, perhaps,

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[319] According to the *ODNB*, Onslow's 'renown rests exclusively on his greatness as a speaker'; however, see Sambrook, *James Thomson, 1700-1748: A Life*, p. 103. Onslow was a patron of Thomson's, and generally admired for his procedural probity; he was also a close friend and adherent of Walpole. On the ambiguities that arise in this passage from the political situation at the time of publication, see Barrell, *English Literature in History*, pp. 67-69.

[320] Pat Rogers, *Pope and the Destiny of the Stuarts: History, Politics, and Mythology in the Age of Queen Anne* (Oxford: OUP, 2005). See also his earlier study, ---, *The Symbolic Design of Windsor-Forest: Iconography, Pageant, and Prophecy in Pope's Early Work (Newark, DE: U of Delaware P, 2004)*.

[321] Pope's translations of sections from the *Metamorphoses* in fact appear in Garth along with those of Dryden, Addison and others.

[322] In *Pope and the Destiny of the Stuarts* Rogers suggests a number of classical sources for the various rivers in *Windsor Forest*. See for instance Ovid's Arethusa identified as a potential source for the Lodona episode, pp. 262-4.

on the various rivers in the *Georgics*, and his tragic Lodona resembles the violated Arethusa; nor do any of the other rivers in his poem evoke the self-reflexive artistry of Ovid's Mæander. It is therefore appropriate that Thomson's *The Seasons* is so much more sinuous and extensive, self-consciously digressive and duplicitous. Thus, in 'Autumn' descriptions of the season are framed by Thomson's debt to, but also his divergence from, the pro-Stuart *Windsor Forest*. One could in fact say that Thomson, in 'Autumn', figures himself as a modern Ovid to Pope's Virgil.

The first section of 'Autumn' follows *Windsor Forest*'s georgic pattern, is dominated by the perspective of the patriot-poet, and depicts scenes of cultivation under the aegis of a personified 'INDUSTRY, rough Power' (43). The latter's 'progress' is traced from barbarism to civilization, culminating in 'the *Patriot-Council*', 'the full,/ The free, and fairly represented *Whole*' (99-100) which 'set, protect, and inspired' 'every Form of cultivated Life/ In Order', '[u]niting All' (109-111). This is followed by an apostrophe to the Thames, but although he repeats the general sequence of *Windsor Forest*, Thomson's phrasing at this point echoes one of Pope's key pre-texts, Denham's *Cooper's Hill*, more clearly. The river appears in the description of a triumphantly mercantile Britain:

> THEN Commerce brought into the public Walk
> The busy Merchant; the big Warehouse built;
> Rais'd the strong Crane; choak'd up the loaded Street
> With foreign Plenty; and thy Stream, O THAMES,
> Large, gentle, deep, majestic, King of Floods! (118-123)

The final line clearly alludes to the celebrated couplet in which the narrator of *Cooper's Hill* prays that like the Thames his poem might be 'Though deep, yet clear, though gentle,

yet not dull,/ Strong without rage, without ore-flowing full'.[323] However, Thomson's version breaks down the decorous balance and symmetry of Denham's harmonious antitheses into a rather awkwardly accented succession of epithets.

On the one hand, this reworking may be understood in terms of his celebration of John Philips later in 'Autumn' as 'the second thou/ Who nobly durst, in Rhyme-unfetter'd Verse,/ With BRITISH Freedom sing the BRITISH Song' (645-47).[324] By placing his poem in an alternative line of British poetry, rewriting royalist couplets as patriotic blank verse, Thomson offers a new view of the Thames and of Britain more generally, distinct from those of Denham and, as we will see, from those of Pope. However, in Denham's poem the 'Bounty flows' *from* the Thames *to* 'the world', not the other way round.[325] Thomson's description of Commerce 'choak[ing] up the loaded Street' and the Thames adds a slightly ominous overtone to Britain's triumph, perhaps hinting at the excesses of modern luxury ('Autumn', 120-1). Thus, on the other hand, the unrhymed slackness of Thomson's version and the intrusion of 'foreign Plenty' into the couplet describing the Thames, may well imply that imperial strength has degenerated into mere material wealth.

It is appropriate, then, that the passages which follow complicate and destabilize the Virgilian symmetry of the poem's 'finish'd Fabric' ('Autumn', 83). Paradoxically, Industry's own 'full, mature, immeasurable Stores [...] waving round, recal [the poet's] wandering Song' from the digression which the personified abstraction has itself occasioned (149-50). The epithet 'wandering' indicates that the muse's 'fond' attempt at

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[323] 'Cooper's Hill', ll. 191-2. For Pope's engagement with *Cooper's Hill* see Earl Wasserman, *The Subtler Language: Critical Readings of Neoclassic and Romantic Poems* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1959); my quotations of Denham's poem are taken from the text included in this book.
[324] The first being Milton.
[325] 'Cooper's Hill', ll. 177, 183.

mixing 'the Patriot's with the Poet's Flame' has somehow lapsed from high georgic to something less elevated; in fact, the whole of 'Autumn' consists of such lapses, detours, and reversions. Recalled to its theme, in lines 151-176 the poem dutifully follows the format of the *Georgics* with a description of a harvest-scene culminating in an appropriately authoritative moral lesson. Nonetheless, this advice, '[t]he various Turns/ Of Fortune ponder; that your Sons may want/ What, now with hard Reluctance, faint, ye give' (174-6), initiates another 'turn' away from the georgic and nature-descriptive focus into the fable of Palemon and Lavinia, so that the account of autumnal nature is delayed again, until line 311, when the wanderer returns to describe an autumn storm and, as in the harvest-scene, provides a suitably edifying interpretation.[326] However, at this point the 'fond' muse is distracted once more, drawn to a rather less noble song:

> the rude Clamour of the sportsman's Joy,
> The Gun fast-thundering and the winded Horn,
> Would tempt the Muse to sing the *rural Game*:[327] (360-2)

This temptation inaugurates what Thomson in the 'Argument' calls a 'ludicrous account of hunting'.[328] 'Ludicrous', derived from the Latin *lūdicr-us* based on the verb *ludere*, to play, brings Ovidian playfulness and allusiveness to the fore; the contemporary English sense of 'pertaining to play or sport; sportive' produces a tautological pun.[329] Essentially,

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[326] 'Ye masters, then,/ Be mindful of the rough laborious Hand,/ That sinks you soft in Elegance and Ease' (350-1).

[327] 'Autumn', ll. 360-2. These lines allude to *Georgics* III, ll. 73-6: '*Cytheron* loudly calls me to my way;/ Thy Hounds, *Taygetus*, open and pursue their Prey. High *Epidaurus* uruges on my speed,/ Fam'd for his Hills, and for his Horses breed'. However, as with the other *Georgics* echoes in 'Autumn', Thomson substantially extends and elaborates the original, making it more Ovidian and mazelike. Dryden, *Poems: The Works of Virgil in English, 1697*, p. 211.

[328] 'Autumn', p. 144.

[329] 'ludicrous, *adj.*', *OED*, definition 1.

Thomson presents an Ovidian reworking of Pope's less melodramatically Ovidian hunt scenes in *Windsor Forest*.

The multi-layered networks of allusion in this section are dense and complex and it becomes difficult to untangle the mass of references or to distinguish between imitation and parody. For instance, allusion to *Windsor Forest* associates Thomson's 'panting' muse with the spaniel that appears in 'Autumn' just as she is exposed to temptation. Pope's version is as follows:

> Before his Lord the ready Spaniel bounds,
> Panting with Hope, he tries the furrow'd Grounds,
> But when the tainted Gales the Game betray,
> Couch'd close […] lyes, and meditates the Prey (99-102)

Thomson's spaniel is similarly 'struck/ Stiff by the tainted gale, with open nose/Outstretched and finely sensible' (363-65). Crucially, however, Thomson's wandering muse is somewhat less disciplined than the dog it describes and succumbs to the temptation to 'sing the rural game', recalling Dryden's description of poetic imagination:

> [I]magination in a poet is a faculty so wild and lawless, that like an high ranging spaniel, it must have clogs tied to it, lest it outrun the judgment. The great easiness of blank verse renders the poet too luxuriant; he is tempted to say many things which might better be omitted, or at least shut up in fewer words[330]

[330] Dryden, 'To Roger, Earl of Orrery', quoted in Richard Bradford, *Augustan Measures: Restoration and Eighteenth-century Writings on Prosody and Metre* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 13. In his edition of Dryden's prose, George Watson notes versions of this simile may be found in multiple texts of the period, but seems to originate as an image of mental enquiry in Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Part I Chapter 3 where it in fact describes the mind running through the alphabet to 'start a rhime'. John Dryden, 'To Roger, Earl of Orrery', in *Of Dramatic Poesy and Other Critical Essays*, ed. by George Watson, 2 vols (London: Dent, 1962), vol. i, pp. 1-9 (p. 8 & n.)

Thomson's muse, like a 'high ranging spaniel' freed from the 'clogs' of rhyme, follows John Philips's example, extends Pope's hunting vignettes, and says 'many things' which the latter had 'shut up in fewer words'. She launches into a sequence of sporting episodes, and the poem's descriptions, structure and vocabulary become increasingly marked by mazes.[331] Like the 'latent Prey', caught in a 'meshy Snare' (366, 370), the verse becomes trapped in a pattern of attempted escape from and erroneous return to the theme of blood sports. Like the wildfowl, the song circles back to the final word of the previous verse-paragraph, 'wind' (359, 378), reminding us again of the spaniel on the scent of game. Although briefly recalled to her duty, the muse soon finds herself once more singing what is *not* 'joy to her' in her attempt to condemn it, and detained by expressing her refusal to be detained:

> THESE are not Subjects for the peaceful Muse,
> Nor will she stain with such her spotless Song;
> Then most delighted, when she social sees
> The whole mix'd Animal-Creation round
> Alive, and happy. 'Tis not Joy to Her,
> This falsely cheerful barbarous Game of Death;
> This Rage of Pleasure (379-400)

In the hunting narratives that follow, the hare (401-425) and the stag (426-457) are anthropomorphized and the pathos of their suffering graphically intensified in comparison to Pope's versions. In 'Autumn' the stag doesn't just suffer but also sobs –

[331] Interesting uses of maze words in this part of 'Autumn' include but are not limited to: the hare who hides by 'the nodding sandy Bank,/ Hung o'er the Mazes of the Mountain-Brook' (408-9) and whose 'early Labyrinth' is betrayed by 'The scented Dew' (414-15). The post-hunt celebrations involve drunken conversations in which, like an exaggerated version of the poem, 'the Talk,/ Vociferous at once from twenty Tongues, / Reels fast from Theme to Theme; from Horses, Hounds,/ To Church or Mistress, Politicks or Ghost,/ In endless Mazes, intricate, perplex'd' (538-42). The playful, mock-heroic turn to praising 'the BRITISH FAIR' describes how 'fashion'd all to Harmony, alone/ Know they to seize the captivated Soul,/ In Rapture warbled from Love-breathing Lips;/ To teach the Lute to languish; with smooth Step,/ Disclosing Motion in its every Charm,/ To swim along, and swell the mazy Dance' (591-96).

'big round Tears roll down his dappled Face' (453) – and 'groans in Anguish' (454), increasing the congruence with Ovid's Actaeon. As the creature is torn apart by the 'growling Pack' (455) the subject is rejected once more, '[of] this enough' (458), but merely shifts to consider more morally acceptable game. The fox, the domestic alternative to the exotic wolf and lion, is seized upon as an allowable prey and the ludicrous account becomes frankly celebratory.

The georgic 'happy he' motif is now applied to the sportsman:

> Throw the broad Ditch behind you; o'er the Hedge
> High bound, resistless; nor, from the deep Morass
> Refuse, but thro' the shaking Wilderness
> Pick your nice Way; into the perilous Flood
> Bear fearless, of the raging Instinct full;
> And as you ride the Torrent, to the Banks
> Your Triumph sound sonorous, running round,
> From Rock to Rock, in circling Echo tost:
> Then scale the Mountains to their woody Tops;
> Rush down the dangerous Steep; and o'er the Lawn,
> In Fancy swallowing up the Space between,
> Pour all your Speed into the rapid Game.
> For happy he! who tops the wheeling Chace;
> Has every Maze evolv'd, and every Guile
> Disclos'd (475-489)

Onslow's rolling periods, 'devolving through the maze of eloquence', are transposed into the sportsman's expert navigation of the maze of landscape and the echoes of the horn's notes, so that song and space correspond. This transformation is effected, in part, by the dialogue with Pope's patriotic poem in which Thomson gives back a 'circling echo' of his source. Thus, 'Autumn' both imitates and playfully exaggerates the original Ovidian references of *Windsor Forest*, fitting them to the characteristic mazy expansiveness and exuberance of *The Seasons* and using them to modulate between self-reflexive

characterisations of the poet's own eloquence and energetic excursions set in the mazelike British landscape.

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The particular complexity of these allusions to *Windsor Forest* perhaps reflects the fact that Pope – unlike Spenser, Milton, Virgil or Ovid – was alive, an acquaintance of Thomson's, and, crucially, still composing, and dominating, British poetry. The conventional yet playful modesty of Thomson's muse registers a sense of indebtedness to Pope as well as a desire to imitate and enlarge upon his contemporary's efforts. However, in a way, this engagement is permitted by the historical pastness of the poetic source. In 1713 Pope had celebrated Stuart rule and British military success in the face of political uncertainty, fusing pastoral timelessness with the historical present by means of georgic motifs. By 1728, when Thomson composed 'Autumn', the political and cultural landscape, as well as Pope's stance towards it, had undergone considerable changes. Thomson's celebration of Pope's genius is thus complicated not only by the difference in their political perspectives and preferred poetic forms, but by the time-span that divides *The Seasons* from *Windsor Forest*. The figure of the maze allows Thomson to articulate this complex stance.

A comparable dynamic of similarity and difference obtains if we return to the episode of Celadon and Amelia discussed at the start of this chapter. As noted above, in it Thomson follows Pope's renderings of a real event, but expands the account and alters

it, introducing the figure of the maze. Not only are Pope's versions much more condensed but his narrative is less tragic:

> Here pitying Heav'n that Virtue mutual found,
> And blasted both, that it might neither wound.
> Hearts so sincere th' Almighty saw well pleas'd,
> Sent his own lightning, and the victims seiz'd.

The event thus told permits the confident exegesis typical of epitaphs:

> Live well, and fear no sudden fate:
> When God calls Virtue to the grave,
> Alike 'tis Justice, soon or late,
> Mercy alike to kill or save.
> Virtue unmov'd can hear the call,
> And face the flash that melts the ball.[332]

In altering the story and leaving one of the pair alive, Thomson destabilizes the closed symmetry of the two deaths, just as his blank verse opens up Pope's tightly controlled couplets, interposing an interpretative lacuna between general providence and the particular manifestation. Allusion to Pope's epitaphs thus prompts us to recognize a key difference between the ordered, explicable realm evoked by the proverbial wisdom of funerary verse, and the type of religious or theodician perspective that Thomson himself wishes to represent. The Celadon and Amelia episode in fact displays, in miniature, all three of the features of mazes which I have discussed and which characterize *The Seasons* as a whole. Not only does it dramatize a transposition of narrative into description, and

[332] See the second of the 'Three Epitaphs: On John Hewet and Sarah Drew' as printed in Alexander Pope, *Minor Poems*, ed. by Norman Ault and John Butt, *TE*, iv, pp. 197-201, p. 199. The first version is similarly exegetical, although less overtly Christian: 'Here pitying heav'n that virtue mutual found,/ And blasted both, that it might neither wound.' (p. 197, ll. 3-4) while the third is comical, 'Here lye two poor Lovers, who had the mishap/ Tho very chaste people, to die of a Clap' (p. 201).

of a physical pattern into a psychological state. It also summarizes, in a self-reflexive manner, the way in which the capacious, digressive fabric of *The Seasons* extends the distance between providential (and poetic) parts and wholes by interpolating poetic precedents.

By examining the complex of sources which inform the poem's apparently miscellaneous collection of episodes and digressions, *The Seasons* may be understood, more clearly than ever, as a coherent but deliberately labyrinthine whole. Although there is no lucid, symmetrical 'Design' of the type prescribed by neoclassical literary theory, nor a continuous narrative or plot, nor even any strong autobiographical identity to lend unity the poem, Thomson is able to structure his work by drawing on the various forms of connection and order made available by echo and allusion, and by the recurring figure of the maze. The fact that the reader is unlikely fully to comprehend that structure without a great investment of time and effort only underscores the greatness and complexity of what it describes, and the self-aware skill of the poet.

CHAPTER FOUR
'MY DEVIOUS LAY': KNOWING STRUCTURE IN *THE PLEASURES OF IMAGINATION*

> 'if you care to be entertained a while with a sort of idle thoughts, such as pretend only to amusement and have no relation to business or affairs, you may cast your eye slightly on what you have before you. And if there be anything inviting, you may read it over at your leisure.'[333]

Introduction

Where Thomson employs the labyrinth, in Akenside's long poem we find a more obviously coherent structural trope. Steven Clark notes that although '"[f]rame" is not perhaps the most exalted of terms', 'it recurs in a variety of powerful contexts in Akenside'.[334] The 'goodly frame/ Of nature' features in the very first sentence of *The Pleasures of Imagination*, and within the next few verse-paragraphs the word is used a further three times.[335] After an invocation and an excursus on the originality of his theme, Akenside gives a Platonic account of the Creation, where the eternal forms of uncreated things are '[u]nfolded' into being by the divinity's 'vital smile', 'the breath/ Of

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[333] Anthony Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, 'A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm to My Lord *****', in *The Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. by Lawrence Klein (Cambridge: CUP, 1999) [henceforth *Characteristics*], pp. 4-28 (p. 4).

[334] Steve Clark, "To Bless the Lab'ring Mind': Akenside's The Pleasures of Imagination', in *Mark Akenside: A Reassessment*, ed. by Robin Dix (London, England: Associated University Presses, 2000), pp. 132-55, p. 142.

[335] Mark Akenside, 'The Pleasures of Imagination', in *The Poetical Works of Mark Akenside*, ed. by Robin Dix (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), pp. 85-174, Book I, l. 1. Dix's text is based on the fifth, 1754 octavo edition, which he finds to be the last to which Akenside himself is likely to have made changes. Differences between the first (1744) and the fifth edition are generally limited to alterations in the wording, with few additions or transpositions at the level of the full line or verse paragraph. The major exception to this is the prose 'Commentary', which is progressively cut back in the later editions. As these notes often serve to highlight important features of the verse, however, my references to them will to be to their fullest, 1744 incarnation.

life informing each organic frame' (I, 73-4). Next, having considered the different biases of 'peculiar minds', he describes how

> the glad impulse of congenial pow'rs,
> Or of sweet sound, or fair-proportion'd form,
> The grace of motion, or the bloom of light,
> Thrills thro' imagination's tender frame,
> From nerve to nerve (I, 116-120)

The word continues to feature prominently throughout the poem, in which the three frames – of nature, of living beings, and of the imagination – are both associated with and distinguished from each other, illustrating man's (and especially the poet's) ability to think 'beyond the limit of his frame' (I, 154).

Akenside's use of the term draws on a variety of precedents. Clark points out that the

> word is a staple of the physio-theological [*sic.*] tradition […] in Richard Blackmore's *Creation*, for example, we find a series of insistent parallels drawn between the "wondrous Frame" of the physical world […] and the "curious Frame" of the human body […] which are used to prepare the key argument of a providential order[336]

To Blackmore one might add many other names, but in the context of the present study one alternative precedent in particular stands out. The excerpts from Book I quoted above not only establish the significance of the 'frame' to 'the pleasures of imagination', but also suggest something of the debt Akenside owes to Pope, who is referred to in the poem's 'Design' as 'the most perfect of modern poets'.[337] John Sitter finds the literary relationship between the two poets to be marked by difference rather than by similarity,

[336] Clark, ''To Bless the Lab'ring Mind'', p. 143.
[337] 'The Pleasures of Imagination', p. 88.

an interpretation which may at least in part be attributed to his description of Akenside as 'a suspiciously republican Deist'.[338] However, although he was branded a republican by Johnson, a view which many later critics seem to have accepted, Dustin Griffin argues convincingly that the poet should rather be understood as a '"Patriot" Whig who came to political maturity in the last years of Walpole's administration'.[339] Given Pope's association with the Patriot Opposition in the thirties and forties, it therefore seems likely that in writing a long non-narrative poem Akenside should look to the example of Pope in general, and to that of *An Essay on Man* in particular.

With this context in mind, the divine 'breath' which enlivens 'each organic frame' in Book I of *The Pleasures* recalls a passage from Epistle I of the *Essay,* where the all-informing God-soul is

> Great in the earth, as in th'ætherial frame,
> […]
> Lives thro' all life, extends thro' all extent,
> Spreads undivided, operates unspent,
> Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
> As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart[340]

In this passage, however, the word is used in a wider sense than the skeletal 'frames' Clark quotes from Blackmore, which implies the sense of 'a structure that supports'. Insofar as the 'ætherial frame' surrounds the earth, it also seems, simultaneously, to mean a structure that 'encloses'.[341] Thus Pope's usage suggests a more complex set of structural analogues than Blackmore's, and Akenside, it will be argued, develops correspondingly

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[338] John Sitter, 'Theodicy at Mid-century: Young, Akenside, and Hume', *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 12 (1978), 90-106 (p. 90).
[339] Dustin Griffin, 'Akenside's Political Muse', in *Mark Akenside: A Reassessment*, pp. 19-50 (pp. 19-20).
[340] *TE*, III.i., ll. 270-276.
[341] *OED*, definition 5.

sophisticated formal models in his own poem. Equally, as will be shown, the wider interest evinced by Pope in the relations between extensive textual wholes and their parts – both structural and qualitative – and the different ways in which they might be read, carries over into the blank verse expanse of *The Pleasures of Imagination*.

The two varieties of frame can also be connected with Clark's astute comment that in Akenside's hands the 'word both vindicates the act of making as something worthy of and allowing access to deity, and serves as a trope of containment, of absolute circumspection' (ibid.), a balance of sublimity and self-restraint which, as we have seen, is crucial to the poetics of greatness as deployed by Addison, whose 'Pleasures of the Imagination' essays provide the title of Akenside's poem. In *The Pleasures of Imagination*, though, the word 'frame' is made to yield still more significance. Clark cites numerous passages from it in the course of his article, but he discusses the poetic act of framing solely in terms of the poem's discursive content as evidenced by localized readings, and does not move on to consider the relation between *The Pleasures*' own formal characteristics and its philosophical thesis. As earlier chapters of this dissertation demonstrate, however, long poems were vitally implicated in mid-eighteenth-century debates regarding the function, and functioning of, poetry, and a degree of formal self-reflexivity is therefore to be expected. The poem's title and topic make this dimension particularly significant. In an essay prefixed to the 1794 edition of *The Pleasures of Imagination*, Anna Barbauld writes that

> [o]f all the subjects which have engaged the attention of Didactic Poets, there is not perhaps a happier than that made choice of by Akenside, [in] *The Pleasures of*

> *Imagination*; in which […] Fancy is made as it were to hold a mirror to her own charms. Imagination is the very source and well-head of Poetry[342]

The image of a narcissistic 'Fancy' neatly pinpoints the way in which the poem recursively reflects its own form and matter back at itself in the manner that Addison had admired in *An Essay on Criticism*. Akenside treats 'the pleasures of imagination' in a medium that is itself considered to constitute such a pleasure; this doubling draws form and content into close proximity, and gives rise to peculiarly self-reflexive rhetorical postures.

As such, *The Pleasures of Imagination* surely demands particularly attentive reading, especially since the poem's opening includes a description of the world as a book to be read:

> the sire omnipotent unfolds
> The world's harmonious volume, there to read
> The transcript of himself. On every part
> They [poets] trace the bright impressions of his hand[343]

Sitter points out that this 'metaphor also reaches past the familiar idea of the Book of Nature through its implication that the text is a difficult one, intended for gifted readers who are capable of tracing the "bright impressions"'.[344] In the last few decades, however, literary analysis of the poem has typically been subordinated to enquiries into its intellectual background. This is undoubtedly an important task, and Nicholas Reid, Karina Williamson, and Richard Terry are among those who have done valuable work in

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[342] Mark Akenside, *The Pleasures of Imagination: To Which is Prefixed a Critical Essay on the Poem, by Mrs. Barbauld.* (London: T. Cadell, Junior and W. Davies, 1794), pp. 5-6.
[343] 'The Pleasures of Imagination', I, ll. 99-102. See also Clark, '"To Bless the Lab'ring Mind"', p. 133, on Akenside's emphasis on 'strenuous endeavour'.
[344] Sitter, 'Theodicy at Mid-century', p. 96.

elucidating its philosophical and scientific sources, which range from the aesthetic theories of Shaftesbury and his disciples, to Plato and the Stoics, and the empiricism of Locke and Newton.[345] Still, as Robin Dix points out, 'it would be wrong to see the work simply as an important document in the history of ideas'.[346] Instead, he emphasizes the exposition of these ideas, and draws on Akenside's early prose writings to demonstrate 'his characteristic attraction to a coherent, systematic intellectual framework in his writing', showing how each of the poem's three books address a clearly definable topic, and that 'the transitions from one stage of the argument to another […] are carefully crafted'.[347]

This understanding of 'coherence' is relatively limited, as becomes clear when Dix juxtaposes *The Pleasures of Imagination* with 'long poems' of the period – notably *The Seasons* and *Night Thoughts* – which he suggests 'cannot be celebrated for their cohesiveness'.[348] A more nuanced approach to form is found in a recent article by Dustin Stewart, who carefully analyses the allegorical tale which appears at the poem's 'hinge' or mid-point, paying close attention to its formal and rhetorical arrangement. The allegory is presented via an elaborate series of narrative frames-within-frames, at the

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[345] Reid addresses the poem's place in the 'Platonic tradition' in order to understand its influence on Coleridge's metaphysics, a focus which occasionally skews his reading of *The Pleasures of Imagination* but nonetheless usefully supplements earlier readings of the poem as primarily reliant on Addison's essays and Locke's epistemology. Karina Williamson's excellent survey of the kinds of philosophical ideas Akenside would have absorbed from his early schooling and his education at the University of Edinburgh provides evidence for the depth and breadth of the poet's reading, as well emphasizing the originality of *The Pleasures of Imagination*'s synthesis of multiple philosophical traditions and theories. Richard Terry provides the historical context for the poem's treatment of ridicule. Nicholas Reid, 'Coleridge, Akenside and the Platonic Tradition: Reading in The Pleasures of the Imagination', *AUMLA*, 80 (1993), 37-56; Karina Williamson, 'Akenside and the 'Lamp of Science'', in *Mark Akenside: A Reassessment*, pp. 51-82; Richard Terry, ''The Mirthful Sting': Akenside and the Eighteenth-Century Controversy over Ridicule', in *Mark Akenside: A Reassessment*, pp. 108-31.

[346] Akenside, 'The Pleasures of Imagination', p. 23.

[347] Robin Dix, *The Literary Career of Mark Akenside, Including an Edition of His Non-medical Prose* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2006), pp. 71, 73.

[348] Ibid., p. 73.

centre of which three figures (later identified as Virtue, Pleasure and Pain) engage a 'smiling youth' in a moral lesson. In addition to its valuable insights into the poem's representations of allegorically-mediated meaning, the article usefully emphasizes the importance of not 'ignoring its complex, self-critical judgements', and draws on George Steiner to describe this central allegory as a kind of structural 'tactical difficulty', and 'the elaborate, indeed difficult textual frames that present understanding as always 'strenuously won'' through temporally extended processes.[349] Ultimately, Stewart suggests, this form of understanding is rejected in Book III in favour of enthusiastically immediate and self-absorbed apprehension.

However, as I argue later in this chapter, the kinds of readings the poem envisages leave both modes of understanding in play. *The Pleasures of Imagination*, like the other long poems discussed so far, both requires and accommodates more than one reading. Thus, while Sitter suggests that memory is relatively unimportant to Akenside's account of mental processes, the appearance of personified 'mem'ry' towards the end of Book III signals the centrality of retrospection and remembrance to Akenside's theory of pleasurable apprehension; similarly, I will argue, Akenside expects readers to remember what has gone before, and to take liberties with the regular, 'successive' flow of blank verse.[350]

Such reading processes are permissible because, Akenside suggests, poetry is a formal structure, and can therefore be traversed in more than one direction. If we re-examine the first usage of the word 'frame' (cited above), it can be seen to introduce the

[349] Dustin D. Stewart, 'Akenside's Refusal of Allegory: *The Pleasures of Imagination*', *JECS*, 34:3 (2011), 315-33 (p. 324).
[350] Sitter, 'Theodicy at Mid-century', p. 98.

poem itself as a fourth frame, ambitiously yet ambiguously setting it alongside those of nature, the body, and the imagination:

> With what attractive charms this goodly frame
> Of nature touches the consenting hearts
> Of mortal men; and what the pleasing stores
> Which beauteous imitation thence derives
> To deck the poet's, or the painter's toil;
> My verse unfolds.[351]

'[T]his goodly frame/ Of Nature', which echoes a phrase from *Paradise Lost*,[352] uses the suspension of grammatical closure characteristic of Milton's blank verse to duplicate meaning to enthusiastic, unorthodox effect. Read as part of an end-stopped line, 'this goodly frame' refers to the poem itself, a claim that is elaborated rather than erased by the completion of the phrase in the next line, which tacitly links the frame of the poem with that of nature. Paradoxically, the spatial, structural analogy emerges from the linear development of sense through the time of reading, and the latter dimension is in fact equally significant in Akenside's initial representation of his poem. The six lines of the opening sentence imitate the syntactic contortions of the exordium of *Paradise Lost*, with all but one line enjambed and the main subject and verb, 'my verse unfolds', deferred to the close. Meaning therefore 'unfolds' progressively through the sentence as ideas or parts of speech are introduced and then modified, line by line, just as the Platonic divinity gradually unfolds life into the frames of living beings (I, 73-4), or as the 'sire omnipotent' self-reflexively reads or unfolds the transcript of himself recorded in the

[351] Akenside, 'The Pleasures of Imagination', Book I, ll. 1-6. Clark describes this as an 'apparently orthodox usage of the term', but it is actually quite unusual.
[352] See Dix's note to 'The Pleasures of Imagination', I l. 1 (p. 438).

book of nature (I, 99-102). The poem as a whole, Akenside implies, will do the same, gradually unfolding to the reader an image of his own mind.

Conversely, the diachronic, linear sense of the opening sentence is supplemented with meaning suggested by the chiastic symmetry of the syntactical pattern into which it is arranged. The implicit identifications of the poem as a 'frame' and as 'verse' that 'unfolds' (intransitively as well as transitively) bookend the sentence, associating yet also contrasting the two modes. As we will see, a similar pattern obtains in the larger structure of the poem: the poet repeatedly foregrounds the lyric and therefore temporal dimension of the poem, while the recurrence of the word 'frame' reminds us that the symmetry of the poem's three-book format continues to exist behind or above the momentary modulations of the song.

(i) The virtuoso poet

The song/frame association is activated by an elaborate layering of meaning which relies on metrical, lexical and formal 'play'. Critics, however, have often denied Akenside this kind of subtlety. John Norton, for example, baldly asserts that '[t]he value of *The Pleasures of Imagination* to contemporary study of eighteenth-century culture cannot be justified by a recognition of its wit, subtlety or irony.'[353] Dix, however, contests such slights by offering various examples of wit in the poem, including the comment on lines in Book I asserting Akenside's claim to poetic originality, which cites Lucretius as the source for the sentiment; this kind of witty contrast between verse and prose note occurs elsewhere, as we shall see, and reads as a strategically toned-down version of the *The*

[353] John Norton, 'Akenside's The Pleasures of Imagination: An Exercise in Poetics', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 3 (1970), 366-83, p. 366.

Dunciad's comical pedantry.[354] Dix also points out the 'parodying of the overwrought conventions of graveyard poetry' in Book I, where

> Tho' the pois'nous charms
> Of baleful superstition guide the feet
> Of servile numbers, thro' a dreary way
> To their abode[355]

What Dix doesn't highlight in the passage is the replication of another conceit used in *The Dunciad*, where 'Maggots half-form'd, in rhyme exactly meet,/ And learn to crawl upon poetic feet';[356] it works particularly well here in view of the heavily pointed and often rhythmically rigid blank verse of *Night Thoughts*, the poem Akenside seems particularly to be targeting. This kind of wordplay, which collapses the already fragile boundaries between text and topic, is pervasive in *The Pleasures of Imagination* and thus has implications for how we understand the poem's manifestations as frame and song.

Dix's examples of wit also suggest the self-reflexive significance of the argument introduced in Book III, that recognizing the ridiculous is a type of pleasurable knowing. The section in question has generally been understood by critics, from Anna Barbauld to present-day commentators like Richard Terry, as being important to the completeness of Akenside's account of psychological pleasures but in other respects stylistically unassimilated to the rest of the poem, a comic or satirical set piece inserted incongruously into the serious body of the whole. However, for Akenside the sense of ridicule is triggered by incongruity, just as the imagination is quick to sense unexpected congruity,

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[354] Dix, *The Literary Career of Mark Akenside*, pp. 112-3. Dix here refers to Book I, ll.45-55.
[355] 'The Pleasures of Imagination', I, 391-394.
[356] *The Dunciad Variorum*, I, 59-60.

and both faculties play a part in the detection of wordplay, wit and irony.[357] Of course, quite distinct senses attach to satire, ridicule, humour and wit in eighteenth-century treatments of the topic.[358] However, I would argue that such distinctions rarely map neatly onto contemporary poetic practice, which typically blurs the taxonomic divisions marked out by critics. This, for instance, is the case in two of Akenside's earliest verse compositions, 'The Virtuoso' and 'The Poet; A Rhapsody', in which Scriblerian wit is fused with Shaftesburian raillery to original effect. The two poems also demonstrate a vivid awareness of contemporary debates on learning and literature that is deployed in novel, often ironic combinations of existing tropes and theories. Furthermore, when viewed side by side they show Akenside exploring the kind of vocabulary, themes and tropes which in *The Pleasures of Imagination* are used as tools for inculcating his philosophical ideas.

'*The* VIRTUOSO; *in Imitation of* Spencer's *Style and Stanza*' was published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in April 1737, when Akenside was just fifteen, but it is a sophisticated pastiche which enlists the lexical and metrical archaisms of Spenserian verse to depict a stock comic character, the pedantic and gullible virtuoso who foolishly pursues his study of the ancient, the obscure and the minute, all the while unaware of his lack of true understanding, sense or morality.[359] His museum, crowded with useless arcana, is a physical emblem of his equally cluttered mind:

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[357] See Akenside's notes to Book III, ll. 75, 84, 121, 152, 191, 207, 228, and esp. 248, 259 ('The Pleasures of Imagination', pp. 167-172).

[358] See for example John Dennis, *A Large Account of the Taste in Poetry, and the Causes of the Degeneracy of it* (1702) on wit compared to the ridiculous.

[359] Mark Akenside, 'The Virtuoso; in Imitation of Spencer's Style and Stanza', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 7 (1737), 224-45. The poem was published in the April number under the pseudonym 'Marcus'. Dix has emphasized Akenside's originality, arguing that 'The Virtuoso' represents one of the earliest examples of eighteenth-century Spenser imitations and parodies. See Robin Dix, 'The Start of Akenside's Career: The 1737 Poems', in *Mark Akenside: A Reassessment*, pp. 83-107.

> His rich musæum, of dimensions fair,
> With goods that spoke the owner's mind was fraught;
> Things ancient, curious, value-worth, and rare[360]

The virtuoso's acquisitive accumulation of knowledge and artefacts is destructive, '[a]lmost unpeopling water, air and land' as he dissects '[b]easts, fishes, birds, snails, caterpillars, flies'. He dotes on his collection, full of useless (but not, to him, 'value-less') things such as ancient coins, live insects and a '*Memphian* mummy-king', and thus '[n]eglects his family, forgets his friend'.[361]

This misapplication of attention draws on an anti-method, anti-scientific discourse in existence since at least the mid-seventeenth-century, whereby the fragmented study of obscure relics and microscopic specimens is shown to paradoxically divorce the student of nature from reality so that he loses all sense of worldly and moral value. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the term virtuoso, linked to the pursuit of learning through empirical enquiry on the Baconian model, provided a means of differentiating practitioners of the new science from charges of pedantry and moral myopia frequently aimed at traditional scholasticism; as Stephen Shapin remarks, 'the imputation of pedantry and incivility to the traditional scholarly form of life was an important resource in the arguments of those who wished to replace scholasticism with a new type of knowledge and a new type of knower', and according to this account '[t]he "Christian *virtuoso*" was *more* rather than less authentically a gentleman for his

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[360] Mark Akenside, 'The Virtuoso; in Imitation of Spencer's Style and Stanza', in *The Poetical Works of Mark Akenside*, pp. 389-91, ll. 37-39.
[361] Akenside, 'The Pleasures of Imagination', ll. 11; 12; 63; 88.

philosophical pursuits'.[362] However, this figuration was unstable and open to satire from the outset. The Royal Society's enthusiasm for obscure relics and new-fangled curiosities was lampooned as early as 1676 in Thomas Shadwell's *The Virtuoso*, in which a deluded virtuoso is ridiculed, and eventually outmanoeuvred, by a pair of gentlemanly 'truewits'.[363] In her incisive reading of the play, Barbara Benedict explains that the logic of such satire is based on the representation of the 'collector' as himself a 'curiosity':

> The satirical transformation of virtuosi into curious items within their own curiosity cabinets co-opts their very power of collecting. Such satires allow audience to turn inquiring subjects into objects. Thus satire discipline curiosity, turning it into the popular condemnation of elite fraud. The fraud is located in the virtuosi's habit of inventing value.[364]

The ridiculous Dr. Fossile in the 1717 comedy *Three Hours After Marriage*, co-authored by Pope, Gay and Arbuthnot, demonstrates that the stereotype still had currency four decades later. Here as in many other works, the Scriblerians 'represent the curious man as a collector, a spectator, an anatomist of the social world whose scientific skill destroys what it would explain and whose appetite devours what it seeks.'[365]

Akenside's virtuoso is clearly drawn from such earlier satires, and is in many respects a deluded and unpleasant figure, but the poem as a whole presents a less straightforwardly negative view of the new learning. As Dix has noticed, the careful reproduction of Spenser's form and diction gives rise to 'self-conscious irony', describing

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[362] S. Shapin, 'A Scholar and a Gentleman - the Problematic Identity of the Scientific Practitioner in Early-Modern England', *History of Science*, 29 (1991), 279-327, p. 298. Similarly, Alice Walters, 'Conversation Pieces: Science and Politeness in Eighteenth Century England', *History of Science*, 35 (1997), 121-54, analyses the idea of 'polite science' in the eighteenth century.

[363] See Barbara M. Benedict, *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 46-51.

[364] Ibid., p. 51.

[365] John Arbuthnot et al., *Three Hours After Marriage*, ed. by John Harrington Smith, *The Augustan Reprint Society Publications* (Millwood, NY: Kraust Reprint Co., 1975). Virtuosi appear in other Scriblerian publications, including *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Dunciad*. Benedict, 71.

the virtuoso in terms which might just as well fit the poet, 'who has immersed himself in the past to achieve this pastiche'.[366] Like its dramatic sources, 'The Virtuoso' turns the curious virtuoso into a curiosity, but Akenside adds another layer of curious spectatorship, implicating the narrator and, therefore, the reader in the subject's scientific and antiquarian enthusiasms. The vivid detail with which the specimens in the virtuoso's collection are enumerated, and the replication in the verse of their crowded arrangement goes beyond a mere display of foolishness:

> Fast by the window did a table stand,
> Where hodiern and antique rarities,
> From *Egypt*, *Greece*, and *Rome*, from sea and land,
> Were thick-besprent of ev'ry sort and size:
> Here a Bahaman-spider's carcase lies,
> There a dire serpent's golden skin doth shine
> Here *Indian* feathers, fruits, and glitt'ring flies;
> There gums and amber found beneath the line,
> The beak of *Ibis* here, and there an *Antonine*.[367]

Almost every line itemizes one or more of his grotesque artefacts, and just as Royal Society members such as Robert Hooke, John Ray or Hans Sloane had gathered their curiosities in print 'collections', Akenside makes his poem a textual repository of the virtuoso's bizarre but entertaining assortment of 'rarities'.[368] The repeated adjective 'rich' ironically emphasizes the way in which the virtuoso fails to comprehend 'true', i.e. the conventional, value of things, and like a wonder-struck medieval monk is as delighted

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[366] Dix, 'The Start of Akenside's Career: The 1737 Poems', p. 91.

[367] 'The Virtuoso', ll. 55-63. The mummy appears in *The Virtuoso* and *Three Hours after Marriage*, as well as in *The Dunciad*, I, 131, where the vast de Lyra and Holland lie 'sav'd by spice, like mummies, many a year'.

[368] John Ray, *Historia plantarum species hactenus editas aliasque insuper multas noviter inventas & descriptas complectens.*, 3 vols (1686), Robert Hooker, *Micrographia* (1665), Sir Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica, with the Natural History of the Herbs and Trees, Four-Footed Beasts, Fishes, Birds, Insects, Reptires* (1707). For early modern printed 'collections', see Marjorie Swann, *Curiosities and Texts: The Culture of Collecting in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

with his tawdry specimens as 'if he'd been of *Albion*'s wealthy cities lord'.[369] Dix argues that the description of the virtuoso's environment generates an 'oppressive atmosphere'.[370] However, in conjunction with related terms such as 'replete' and 'thick-besprent', the repetition of 'rich' seems simultaneously to transform the motley collection into an abundant and 'glitt'ring' treasure trove. There is relish in the precision with which objects are fitted into their places in the virtuoso's 'musæum' – some are on a table in the corner, others in a 'scrutoire' or on a table under the window, or placed above the virtuoso's head and under his feet. The directions are so precise they could be used as set designs, perhaps reflecting Akenside's dramatic sources, and as such evoke something of the visual excitement of the period's elaborate stage décor.

This ambiguity between moral satire and virtuosic or spectatorial relish is already implied in the fact that 'the more successful the poem is in its imitation of Spenser, the closer the implied parallel between the satirist and the satirized'.[371] 'The Virtuoso' keeps comic satire, vivid ekphrasis and moralizing in equilibrium through the carefully pitched irony of the authorial voice, which is flexible enough to contain the comic depiction of the crocodile towering over the virtuoso's head with a dazzling catalogue of his museum and the moral weight of the finale.[372] Natural philosophy is not worthless, just misapplied by the virtuoso, and the transformation of his collection into poetry does what he himself fails to do: it brings out its richness and fascination through an intricate verse form and a 'curious' tone, reconnecting the mass of artefacts in a coherent metrical frame that replicates the interconnected whole of the natural or social context of their origin.

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[369] 'The Virtuoso', l. 45.
[370] Robin Dix, 'The Start of Akenside's Career', p. 87.
[371] Dix, 'The Start of Akenside's Career: The 1737 Poems', p. 91.
[372] 'The Virtuoso', ll. 74.

These themes and features clearly prefigure those of *The Pleasures of Imagination*. Dix points out various connections between the two poems, noting for instance that personified Phantasy in 'The Virtuoso' serves to highlight the underlying moral ambiguity for Akenside of the very notion of 'imagination', providing an interesting counterpoint to the celebration of imagination in *The Pleasures*.[373] However, 'The Virtuoso' anticipates not just the themes of *The Pleasures of Imagination*, but also shows in miniature many of the same formal and tonal features, and allows us to notice in *The Pleasures* the ironic, knowing tone of the earlier poem, somewhat sublimated to the explanatory, and a shifting, 'thick-besprent' arrangement of ancient sources and modern learning and of parts within the whole.

The dangers and attractions of Phantasy to literary types, and the poet's resemblance to the virtuoso, are further developed in 'The Poet; A Rhapsody'. Published only three months after 'The Virtuoso', it reads as a working-out of the implications of the earlier poem's insights into scientific inquiry for literature.[374] Like its forerunner, 'The Poet; A Rhapsody' draws on Scriblerian pre-texts, but also echoes other poems on similar themes by Juvenal, Spenser, Cowley and Oldham, and borrows many events, such as the poet's narrow escape from a dun, from John Philips' *The Splendid Shilling. An Imitation of Milton* (1705).[375] 'The Poet' describes, in mock-Miltonic blank verse, the predicament of a poet who, disdaining 'the vile service of some fool in pow'r', is instead hopelessly in thrall to the 'inspiring' but 'false' muse.[376] Although the poem's verse form is very different from that of 'The Virtuoso', it has a similar narrative structure: it

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[373] She is 'vagrant' and colourful, and her creation is 'wild'.
[374] First published in the July number of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 7 (1737), 441-42, under the pseudonym 'Marcus'.
[375] See Dix, 'The Start of Akenside's Career: The 1737 Poems', 96-98.
[376] ---, 'The Poet; a Rhapsody', in *The Poetical Works of Mark Akenside*, pp. 395-99, ll. 4; 17; 96; 163.

starts with an overview of the poet's situation, then considers his possessions and their arrangement in his dwelling, a garret. Finally, after a brief excursion to the city, Akenside shows his poet in the process of composing, haunted by anxieties until '[t]he scribbling itch has seiz'd him' and he is once again prey to the muse's visions and delusions.[377] Dix notes the very prominent self-irony inherent in the project of satirizing a frenzied poet in verse that is deliberately bombastic, with self-consciously grandiose diction and imagery:

> He who supports the luxury and pride
> Of craving *Lais*; he! whose carnage fills
> Dogs, eagles, lyons; has not yet enough,
> Wherewith to satisfy the greedier maw
> Of that most rav'nous, that devouring beast
> Yclep'd a poet[378]

'Yclep'd' in this context is probably a borrowing from Milton, who uses the word in 'L'Allegro',

> But come thou goddess fair and free,
> In heaven ycleapt *Euphrosyne*,
> And by men, heart-easing Mirth[379]

Euphrosyne, as it happens, appears in the allegory in Book II of *The Pleasures of Imagination*, providing further evidence that the early and the later works form a compositional continuum. Equally, the exaggeratedly Miltonic syntax shows Akenside

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[377] Ibid., ll. 166. C.f. Tibbald's frenzy in *The Dunciad*, I, 114-5.
[378] Ibid., ll. 151-56.
[379] Milton, 'L'Allegro', in *The Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. by John Carey, rev. 2nd ed., pp. 134-143 (ll. 11-13).

exploring the comic, witty and satiric potential of the verse form he would later use for the 'serious' didactic poem.

However, '[y]clep'd' also replicates a Spenserianism from the earlier poem, and the poet's ambition resembles the destructive greed of the virtuoso whose collecting 'unpeoples' earth, sea and land. In common with the virtuoso, the poet has a predilection for collecting things, and although he has more limited resources, gathers into his garret all manner of texts and fragments. Akenside's description of the library, which again draws on Book I of *The Dunciad*, evokes the same crowded atmosphere as the virtuoso's scrutoire, only with more dust and less glitter:

> around in tott'ring ranks,
> On shelves pulverulent, majestick stands
> His library; in ragged plight, and old;
> Replete with many a load of criticism
> Elab'rate products of the midnight toil
> Of Belgian brains[380]

He also possesses a version of the virtuoso's museum, a term which in this context playfully conflates the room's contents with the 'muse' who haunts it:

> Elsewhere the dome is fill'd with various heaps
> Of old domestick lumber […]
> Fragments of verse, hose sandals, utensils
> Of various fashion, and of various use,
> With friendly influence hide the sable floor.
> This is the bard's musæum[381]

This outlandish collection emphasizes the poet's extreme poverty (material *and* mental) and, like the virtuoso's museum, provides a striking image of his chaotic, threadbare

[380] Akenside, 'The Poet; A Rhapsody', ll. 29-34.
[381] Akenside, 'The Poe; A Rhapsody', ibid., ll. 41-51.

thoughts; the muse who shares this space is, by implication, equally deranged. However, the term 'replete', already seen in 'The Virtuoso', is used twice to describe the crowded attic and just as in the earlier poem, it evokes an atmosphere of curious abundance. As a collector of unwanted cultural remnants he is foolishly prizing the worthless (his critical texts and Belgian philosophy have been 'snatch'd from the deadly hands/ Of murd'rous grocer' or tobacconist).[382] Nevertheless, the poet's desire to preserve these fragments mirrors the poem's detailed descriptions of objects and of their position in the room, which again exhibit an interest in preserving the miscellaneous and multiple within the poetic whole.

'The Virtuoso' and 'The Poet; A Rhapsody' share many common features; in both, an ironic narrator depicts in a self-reflexive manner the unstable boundary between reality and imagination, the value of empirical knowledge, and the dubious pleasures of collecting literary and scientific artefacts. I have focused on the 'catalogue' parts of the poems because their use of mock-Spenserian or mock-epic ekphrasis draws attention to their medium, with the poems becoming textual repositories or replicas of their subject-matter, just as the Addisonian title of *The Pleasures of Imagination* suggests its function as a repository of 'the pleasing stores' of imagination evoked at the start of Book I. Akenside's apparent fascination with his protagonist's collections also shows a precedent for word-games, with repeated play on the multiple meanings of 'musæum' as relating to both scientific collection and the muses' dwelling, thus conflating physical space and goods with poetic inspiration and its personification, 'the muse'.[383]

[382] Ibid., ll. 34-5.
[383] 'The Poet; a Rhapsody', l. 51.

As the first and third published works of a young poet, the two poems are quite impressive. Not least of their successes is a deftly handled reflection of and reference to a broad range of literary and philosophical sources; Akenside's university studies clearly gave him the opportunity of reading extensively, and this is as apparent in the much shorter early poems as in *The Pleasures of Imagination*. Particularly interesting, however, are the poems' echoes of Shaftesbury.[384] In addition to the sources discussed above, 'The Virtuoso' draws on the more nuanced discussions of virtuosi in Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* (1711). In 'The Poet; A Rhapsody' we find a distinctly Scriblerian distaste for the antics of impoverished hacks and enthusiastic dunces, but the intense concern with the disordered state of the poet's mind seems to stem from 'Soliloquy; Or, Advice to An Author', in which Shaftesbury stresses the importance of self-scrutiny and mental balance for the production of good literature. The influences are also present in the poetic voice; the tonal irony of 'The Virtuoso' resembles that of Shaftesburian raillery while the title and the more 'rhapsodic' parts of 'The Poet; A Rhapsody' parody 'The Moralists; A Philosophical Rhapsody'.[385]

(ii) Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*: harmony and miscellany

That Shaftesbury's writings are a strong influence in Akenside's poetry has of course long been recognized; it was noted by contemporaries, and the textual relationship was

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[384] See Dix, who convincingly proposes that the two poems be read as an original amalgamation of Scriblerian and Shaftesburian sources. Robin Dix, 'The Start of Akenside's career: the 1737 Poems', in *Mark Akenside: A Reassessment*, pp. 83-107.

[385] Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. by Lawrence E Klein (Cambridge: CUP, 1999). Shaftesbury discusses or refers to virtuosi in 'A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm', 'Sensus Communis; an Essay Concerning Wit and Humour', 'The Moralists' and 'Miscellany III'.

the object of scholarly attention throughout the twentieth century.[386] Akenside cites *Characteristics* in the notes to Book I of *The Pleasures of Imagination*, referring to its author as 'the noble restorer of ancient philosophy', and a note to Book II reproduces a passage from 'Soliloquy; or, Advice to an Author'. Shaftesbury's neoplatonic metaphysical structures, his interest in authorial self-scrutiny, and his emphasis on easy politeness in literature have all been noted at one time or another as reflected in Akenside's writing. Nevertheless, a closer look at Shaftesbury's most influential work reveals a number of complexities and ambiguities which have not, so far as I know, been previously identified as part of the philosophy which Akenside inherits from 'the noble restorer'.

In his *Oxford DNB* entry on Shaftesbury, Lawrence Klein describes the three-volume *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* as a 'complex as well as a composite book'. It is in effect an anthology of earlier treatises written and in some cases published by Shaftesbury over a number of years, with the third volume containing 'Miscellanies' which comment on the treatises.[387] In addition to this compositional complexity, the form and style in which Shaftesbury presents his ideas is deliberately oblique and undogmatic. Klein comments on Shaftesbury's use of 'gentlemanly' Socratic dialogue, and of the refined conversational tone of Horace throughout the poem; there is also an element of the playful, experimental manner of Montaigne's *essais*, and irony persists throughout the *Characteristics*, although it is tempered by the conventions

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[386] E.g. Charles Houpt, 'Mark Akenside: A Biographical and Critical Study' (Doctoral Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1944) and Nicholas Reid, 'Coleridge, Akenside and the Platonic Tradition: Reading in the Pleasures of Imagination', *AUMLA*, 80 (1993), 37-56. Aside from Dix's work, more recent scholarship addressing the Akenside's debt to Shaftesbury include David Vallins, 'Akenside, Coleridge, and the Pleasures of Transcendence', in *Mark Akenside: A Reassessment*, pp. 156-82.

[387] Lawrence E Klein, 'Cooper, Anthony Ashley, Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [accessed 9 Feb 2009].

of polite conversation.[388] As Robert Markley notes, 'style in *The Characteristics* is part revelation, part complex game. It does not simply convey or passively reflect objective ideas but demonstrates, even embodies, the values it upholds'.[389] The complex structure couched in ironic, gentlemanly language 'studiously resists categoric definition of its central terms' in a way that seems to illuminate some of the more difficult formal and tonal aspects of Akenside's poetry.[390]

Nonetheless, despite this complexity, recurring themes and ideas build a consensus across the text – just as *The Pleasures of Imagination* remains coherent and memorable despite its elaborate structure. Among these recurring themes is the insistence that harmony and order are requisites for both moral and aesthetic excellence. In 'Soliloquy; Or, Advice to an Author', Shaftesbury invokes them as part of a typical distinction made between the false poet, applauded by 'we moderns' for merely 'having attained the chiming faculty of language with an injudicious random use of wit and fancy', and the true poet, who 'forms a whole, coherent and proportioned in itself, with due subjection and subordinacy of constituent parts' which mirror 'those numbers which make the harmony of a mind'. Here, structure is made the crucial factor in literary work, with the poet as neoclassical 'architect' forming the text according to principles of

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[388] This aspect is noted, for example, by John A. Dussinger in '"The Lovely System of Lord Shaftesbury": An Answer to Locke in the Aftermath of 1688?', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42:1 (1981): 151-158 (p. 154).

[389] Robert Markley, 'Style as Philosophical Structure: The Contexts of Shaftesbury's Characteristicks', in *The Philosopher as Writer: The Eighteenth Century* (London: Associated University Presses, 1987), p. 143.

[390] Richard Terry, "the Mirthful Sting': Akenside and the Eighteenth-Century Controversy over Ridicule', p. 109. Terry here is referring specifically to 'An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour' but his comment seems to apply equally well to the *Characteristics* as a whole.

'proportion' and 'harmony', which he finds in his own harmonious consciousness. Thus, both the artistic mind and the art work are emblems of the Creation.[391]

The complexity inherent in this description of literary structure is pointed up by the famous description of the poet as 'a second maker, a just Prometheus under Jove', an unusual formulation of the author-Creator analogy which figures the poet as a disobedient challenger to God, and implies that poetry may be as great and intricate as Creation.[392] Nonetheless, Shaftesbury's emphasis on harmonious structure makes the discrepancy of scale between artwork and the vast Creation potentially problematic, for nature's order extends to infinite levels of structural interconnectedness, which to mortal viewers can appear merely random. In Part II, Section 4 of 'The Moralists', Theocles describes for his unenlightened guests 'the structure of things in general and of the order and frame of nature'.[393] Different types of structural connections underpin harmonious nature, such as contiguity and functional dependence, so that '[a]ll things in this world are united' and the parts are 'fitted and joined' in a tightly tessellated pattern to form 'one common stock'.[394]

However, the very complexity of the pattern threatens to disable the human assertion of its unity and harmony. The ontological disjunction between parts and whole, and the issue of what happens if natural harmony is beyond any human's perception, cause Theocles' rhapsodic descriptions of natural unity to veer repeatedly towards

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[391] Anthony Ashley Third Earl of Shaftesbury Cooper, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. by Lawrence E Klein (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), p. 93.
[392] The trope of artist as Promethean creator is of course a common one in this period, and similar descriptions of the poet's creative power are to be found in many contemporary critical texts of the time; see, for example, John Dennis, *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701).
[393]Cooper, *Characteristics*, p.273.
[394] Ibid., p. 275.

hypothetical scenarios where nature disintegrates into the merely random, or is perceived as such:

> If [the parts of the universe] are not united all in general, in one system, but are, in respect of each one another, as the driven sands or clouds or breaking waves, then, there being no coherence in the whole, there can be inferred no order, no proportion, and consequently no project or design.[395]

As so often in early eighteenth-century engagements with the supernaturally immense, the interlinked design of the universe threatens to disperse into a mass of Epicurean atoms if viewed by an insufficiently educated spectator – or even simply by one of human rather than divine intelligence – and the threat is marked by figures of chaos, randomness and dispersion drawn from the natural world.

That parts or aspects of the divinely harmonious natural world should be invoked as symbols of random chaos undermines the force of Theocles' assertions, and Philocles is quick to pick up on it in his response, which highlights the discrepancy by pulling the focus out from the neat world towards a hypothetically vast and discordant universe:

> Old Father Chaos, as the poets call him, in these wild spaces reigns absolute and upholds his realms of darkness. He presses hard upon our frontier and one day, belike, shall by a furious inroad recover his lost right, conquer his rebel state, and reunite us to primitive discord and confusion.[396]

The sublime image of a world constantly threatened by descent into chaos, expressed as it is in more poetic, figurative terms than any of the previous descriptions of harmonious nature, reinforces the earlier hints that natural forces like the wind and the currents may

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[395] Ibid., p. 274.

[396] Anthony Ashley Third Earl of Shaftesbury Cooper, 'The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody, Being a Recital of Certain Conversations on Natural and Moral Subjects', in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. by Lawrence E Klein (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), pp. 231-338 (p. 279).

be random and disunited.[397] Paradoxically, however, his mistaken perspective is also a guarantee or proof of the universe's sublimely unified complexity.

If we return to the task of framing the mortal text, 'The Moralists' thus seems to put a question to 'Soliloquy': how can such intricate regularity within irregularity, to use Dennis's terms, be represented in literature; how, in other words, can a text exhibit apparent 'Chaos' yet reveal, to the enlightened reader, an ingenious 'order'? I would argue that the 'collected' text of the *Characteristics* suggests an answer to this question, one that would prove helpful to Akenside when he came to write his own philosophical work. If the need for harmony in the mind and work of the true author is grounded in the theory of harmonious nature, so Philocles' random, dispersed universe might translate into a structural (dis)order which is almost the mirror image of harmony: miscellany. The 'Miscellanies' at the end of *Characteristics* offer the reader a version of this, ostensibly discrediting miscellany as a type of literary composition, but in so ironic a manner as to risk conflating it with acceptable styles of discourse, such as polite conversation or poetic rhapsody.[398] 'Miscellaneous Reflections on the Preceding Treatises and Other Critical Subjects' originally formed the final volume of the *Characteristics*, and functions both as a scholarly commentary on the preceding texts and as a means of including discussions of various themes and topics not directly related to them. It is divided into five sections, each of which is keyed to one of the preceding

[397] Philocloes' image of the personified 'Chaos' seems to support John Dussinger's argument that Shaftesbury's rejection of Locke is triggered by an underlying fear of epistemological fragmentation.
[398] See Pat Rogers, 'Shaftesbury and the Aesthetics of Rhapsody', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 12 (1972), 244-57 on the different meanings of 'rhapsody' in *Characteristics*. See also Robert W. Uphaus, 'Shaftesbury on Art: The Rhapsodic Aesthetic', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 27 (1968), 341-48 and Richard Terry, 'The Rhapsodical Manner in the Eighteenth Century', *The Modern Language Review*, 87 (1992), 273-85.

treatises. Their contents are outlined in brief lists that resemble the typical epic and long-poem 'argument':

> *Review of enthusiasm. Its defence, praise. Use in business as well as pleasure. Operation by fear, love. Modifications of enthusiasm: magnanimity; heroic virtue; honour; public zeal*[399]

The lists are not complete accounts of what follows. Their laconically disjointed enumeration seems to fit into the definition of miscellany as anthology, and prepares the reader for a fragmented, incidental collection of random ideas and *aperçus* only loosely connected to the corresponding treatise. This suggestion is misleading, since the bulk of each Miscellany is devoted to thorough, coherent and often slightly pedantic expansions of themes very clearly taken from the texts that each comments. In Miscellany II, for instance, the thesis in 'Sensus Communis, an Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour' that religious toleration and the practice of ridicule are beneficial to virtue and politeness is further expanded with historical exempla and corroborating references to classical and biblical authorities, in the manner of scholastic commentary. In comparison to the conversational, witty or rhapsodic tones of the majority of the *Characteristics* these passages seem dry and academic in a way that the list headings fail to hint at.

The use of a more learned manner is surprising given Shaftesbury's frequent remarks on the importance of bringing philosophy out of the academy and into polite society. The display of scholarship might partly be a way of practising self-improving 'self-conversation', returning to earlier texts in order to expand, complicate or qualify

[399] Cooper, *Characteristics*, p. 351.

them, and as such it is consistent with the attitude of the gentleman-author.[400] However, Shaftesbury seems very conscious of the academic flavour it introduces, and he intermittently takes on the persona of a 'miscellaneous' author as a counterpoint to the serious discussions, using the former to both correct for and justify the latter.

The miscellaneous parts of the Miscellanies thus function as light relief to balance the seriousness of the rest, repeatedly proclaiming their inconsequential, fragmented style and lauding the benefits to author and reader of not having to follow a method. Miscellany I opens with an extensive introduction to the 'miscellaneous style', where it is described satirically as a wonderful new method for increasing the 'harvest of wit', whose invention, like many modern goods, is attributed to modern liberty which has removed the 'yoke' of 'strict laws and rules of composition' from 'the free spirits and forward geniuses of mankind'.[401] The result is a profusion of 'delicious fruits and fragrant flowers' in 'every field, […] every hedge or hillock' which previously grew only in 'richest and best cultivated gardens'.[402] This evocation of a wild luxuriance of literature is not straightforwardly satirical. The enthusiastic energy of the language is too close to Shaftesbury's 'straight' rhapsodies and dialogues for the reader to take it as wholly tongue-in-cheek, and along with its suggestion that such anthological fruits and flowers will satisfy only 'the rude taste of unpolished mankind', there is an extent to which the lavish surplus of wit is depicted as a corollary of modern polite society.

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[400] As per 'Soliloquy; Or, Advice to an Author'. Lawrence Klein highlights the 'underlying irony' of the fact 'that Shaftesbury, who so often attacked pedants, antiquarians and others for the inconsequence of their material and the inelegance of their style, was eager to display the scholarly evidence that supported his politically and philosophically inflected history of Western culture' (*Characteristics,* p. xxi).
[401] *Characteristics,* p. 339.
[402] Ibid., p. 340.

However, the satirical emphasis of the passage shows through more pointedly when the author asserts that

> nothing could better serve this popular purpose [of 'extending the bottom of wit'] than the way of miscellany or common essay, in which the most confused head, if fraught with a little invention and provided with commonplace-book learning, might exert itself to as much advantage as the most orderly and well-settled judgement'.[403]

In this instance it seems obvious that it would be better for humankind if the confused and unlearned had no such means of flowering into literature. The garden metaphor is replaced by one of weaving, where skill and workmanship are required to 'frame a pattern or plan' in order to 'create a kind of harmony to the eye'. Miscellany, by contrast is mere '[p]atchwork':

> Cuttings and shreds of learning, with various fragments and points of wit, are drawn together and tacked in any fantastic form [...].The eye, which before was to be won by regularity and had kept true to measure and strict proportion, is by this means pleasingly drawn aside to commit a kind of debauch and amuse itself in gaudy colours and disfigured shapes of things.[404]

This attack distances *Characteristics* from the patchwork productions it derides, warning the reader that the Miscellanies, and indeed the whole work, are not a random collection of disparate comments. In the distinction between the skilled weavers of beautiful images and the untutored cobblers of miscellanies lies a second distinction between the unlearned, who are encouraged in their modern (mis-)understanding of 'miscellaneous' by repeated and laboured emphases on the word, and the thorough, educated readers who will have noticed (or are already familiar with) the definition given by Shaftesbury in

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[403] Ibid., p. 340.
[404] *Characteristics*, p. 340.

'Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author' of the 'Roman miscellanies' as 'satiric pieces'.[405] All the same, the 'sprightly glare' of popular forms such as anthology, miscellany and commonplace book do persist, the miscellany and anthology in the disjointed lists and deliberate non sequiturs of the Miscellanies, and the putative contents of a commonplace book in the collection of quotations assembled in the footnotes. 'Delicious fruits and fragrant, flowers' however vulgar, are required to adorn the logic and rigour of learning even when their popular source is rejected.

The complex structure of Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* does not quite oppose harmony and miscellany, but subordinates the latter to the former. The awareness that the two qualities are interdependent is expressed in the work's structure, with its cross-references and self-echo across sections, and in the gentlemanly, knowing and intermittently 'miscellaneous' tone of the main narrator. The play on 'miscellany' as both a type of satire and a disjunctive style of writing hides the rationally instructive within the foolishly chaotic, and also suggests that the sense of ridicule and the interest in the particular which characterize the gentleman virtuoso are different facets of the ability to notice difference, disjunction and incongruity, the crucial corollary to the awareness of harmony. The latter, conversely, is a manifestation of the ability to perceive sublime similarity, union and wholeness among the disparate parts of the human mind, the work of art or the natural universe.[406]

[405] Ibid., p. 116.
[406] Cooper, *Characteristics*, pp. 406-7.

(iii) Philosophy and the musical muse

The evidence of Akenside's early poems and of a key philosophical and literary source, the *Characteristics*, places the theory that *The Pleasures of Imagination* is in fact designedly witty, and coherent not just in terms of its philosophical argument but in its formal representation of its topic, on much firmer ground. It also allows us to notice further ways in which the poem's lyric 'song' is tied to its didactic, philosophical 'frame'.

In his 'Life of Akenside', Samuel Johnson complains that when Akenside 'lays his ill-fated hand upon his harp, his former powers seem to desert him […o]f his odes nothing favourable can be said'.[407] However, his odes and 'hymns' were influential for later poets like Collins and Gray, and modern scholarship offers evidence for their sustained and innovative engagement with classical, and especially Greek, lyric genres.[408] The concern with poetry's lyric dimension is almost equally prominent in *The Pleasures of Imagination*, even though its 'didactic' manner and metre ostensibly separates it from the lyric works.[409] In 'The Design', Akenside emphasizes the affinities between poetry and music when he notes that unlike painting and sculpture (which 'directly copy the external appearances' of nature), they bring such appearances 'back to remembrance by signs universally establish'd and understood.'[410] Furthermore, within the poem, he repeatedly makes use of the traditional rhetoric of the lyric poet, figuring himself as singing and his poem as 'song' or 'strains', and referring to his 'lyre'.[411]

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[407] Johnson, *Lives*, vol. IV, p. 175.
[408] See for e.g. Joseph Warton, *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope* (1756) in *ECCO* [accessed October 2009], p. 141; David Fairer, "Love was in the next Degree': Lyric, Satire, and Inventive Modulation', *JECS*, 34:2 (2011), 147-66 (pp. 151-53).
[409] That Akenside himself clearly viewed the poem as didactic is clear from 'The Design', where he describes the effect he hopes the poem will have on the reader, and refers his procedures to Virgil, 'the faultless model of didactic poetry' ('The Pleasures of Imagination', ed. Dix, pp. 88-9).
[410] 'The Pleasures of Imagination', p. 86.
[411] See for example I, ll. 7, 32, 34, 56, 135, 283, 325.

Book II of *The Pleasures of Imagination* starts by describing '[t]he separation of the works of imagination from philosophy' as 'the cause of their abuse among the moderns'.[412] This takes the form of a narrative modelled on the many patriotic 'progress' poems of the period, from Addison's *A Letter from Italy* (1709) to Thomson's *Liberty* (1735). '[T]he laurel and the vocal string' respectively represent the sciences and the imaginative arts (two symbols that recur throughout the book) and accordingly 'works of imagination' are primarily represented by lyric poetry.[413] When the 'shades of Gothic night […] involve the nations', 'barbarian hands' 'unstrung the lyre', and the Muses depart from Italy 'wildly warbling'; irrespective of what arts they represent, they all seem to sing.[414] Finally, as the 'radiant æra' of British liberty 'dawns' (II, 42),

> th' harmonious Muse
> And her persuasive sisters then shall plant
> Their shelt'ring laurels o'er their bleak ascent,
> And scatter flow'rs along the rugged way. (II, 58-60)

The clearly pre-eminent 'harmonious Muse' is of the kind found in Greek lyric, like the '*Queen* of all Harmonious things,/ *Dancing Words*, and *Speaking Strings*' whom Cowley invokes at the start of 'The Second Olympique Ode of Pindar', but 'her persuasive sisters' seem to be more generic muses.[415] Perhaps because they are the daughters of memory, their appearance triggers a synopsis of Book I (II, 62-7), so that the retrospective cultural history concludes with an equivalent recapitulation of the poem's own 'progress'. Alternatively, the prompt the harmonious muse and her sisters provide

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[412] Akenside, *The Pleasures of Imagination*, ed. Dix, Book II, 'Argument', p. 110.
[413] Ibid., II, l. 1.
[414] Ibid., 6-7, 16-17, 20.
[415] Abraham Cowley, 'The Second Olympique Ode of Pindar', in *Poems*, ed. by A. R. Waller, 2 vols (Cambridge: CUP, 1905), vol. ii, pp. 157-69, ll. 1-2.

might equally lie in their resemblance to figures in the opening invocation of Book I, those of 'Harmony', 'Fiction' and 'Fancy', who together make up the 'Musical Powers'.

These figures, not exactly muses but certainly personifications, 'attend' the poet in the sense of 'to listen to' as well as 'to watch over' or 'wait upon':[416]

> Attend, ye gentle POW'RS
> OF MUSICAL DELIGHT! and while I sing
> Your gifts, your honours, dance around my strain.[417]

The choice of 'musical powers' over conventional muses is striking given the role the latter play in Book II, and suggests that Akenside might have been conscious of Shaftesbury's mockery of the trope at the start of 'A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm', where he objects to modern authors pretending to be inspired by deities they know to be fictional.[418] However, another layer of meaning is added by the prose comment to the lines, which subjects 'musical' to the kind of manipulation given to 'miscellaneous' in the *Characteristics*, or to 'muse' and 'museum' in 'The Poet; a Rhapsody'. In it, Akenside uses lexical affinity to forge a link between music and 'the pleasures of imagination' in general, pre-emptively sanctioning the second book's representation of the imaginative arts by uniformly 'warbling' muses:

> The word MUSICAL is here taken in its original and most extensive import; comprehending as well as the pleasure we receive from the beauty or magnificence of *natural* objects, as those which arise from poetry, painting, music, or any other of the elegant and imaginative arts. In which sense it has been already used in our language by writers of unquestionable authority'.[419]

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[416] *OED*, definitions 1 and 5.
[417] 'The Pleasures of Imagination', I, 6-8.
[418] Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, pp. 4-7. The rejection of the muse as a source of inspiration is introduced as part of a compliment to the letter's addressee, Lord Somers.
[419] *The Poetical Works of Mark Akenside*, p. 154. In the first edition this comment would have been immediately visible as a footnote to the verse.

As Dix points out in his edition, the 'writers of unquestionable authority' who have 'used the term in this very broad sense remain obscure'.[420] Elsewhere he adds that '"MUSICAL," then, needs to be understood as deriving not from "music" but from "muses" – and even this unusually broad signification is stretched to its limits by the inclusion of "*natural* objects"'.[421] However, given the context, it is more likely that Akenside expects the readers to recognize the *coexistence* of the two derivations – from 'music' and from 'the muses' – which can be traced back to a common origin in classical Greek. This in turn emphasizes the Platonic and Shaftesburian overtones of the passage.

The entry for 'music' in Chambers's *Cyclopædia* (1728) allows us to gauge something of the spectrum of meanings evoked by this juxtaposition of lay and (apparently invented) learned usages: 'MUSIC', Chambers writes, is

> the Science of Sound, consider'd as capable of producing Melody, or Harmony: or, the Art of disposing and conducting Sounds, consider'd as grave and acute; and proportioning them among themselves, and separating them by just Intervals, pleasing to the Sense.

Harmony and pleasure play a central role in this definition, just as they do in Shaftesburian aesthetics and in Akenside's poem. More esoteric senses are also considered. After an account of the theoretical and practical branches of music, Chambers turns to the word's history:

> We find a strange Diversity in the antient Writers, as to the Nature, Office, Extent, Division, *&c.* of *Music*.

[420] Ibid., p. 438.
[421] Dix, *The Literary Career of Mark Akenside*, p. 123.

> The Name is suppos'd originally form'd from *Musa*, Muse; the Muses being suppos'd to be the Inventors thereof […] *Hesychius* tells us, the *Athenians* gave the Name *Music* to every Art.
>
> *Hermes Trismegistus* defines *Music* to be the Knowledge of the Order of all things; which is also the Doctrine of the *Pythagorean* School, and of the *Platonists*, who teach, that every thing in the Universe is *Music*.[422]

Chambers's progressive widening of the sense of 'music' as he traces its history provides a useful context for that enacted by Akenside in the prose commentary.[423] The forced shift from the tuneful sense of musical (or muse-ical) abilities to implicitly divine powers of universal pleasure, whose gifts the poet claims he is *singing*, and which, furthermore, are depicted as 'attending' and dancing 'around' his 'strain', elaborately re-inscribes the ambitious and circular self-reflexivity of the exordium, which directly precedes the invocation.

In this respect, the reference to clearly non-existent 'authorities' works to mitigate the implied hubris of this tactic, as the voice of the poet, rapturously invoking musical muses, and the scholarly tone of the commentator anxious to establish a precedent of usage, mutually destabilize each other, much as Shaftesbury's pedantic and miscellaneous alter egos in the 'Miscellanies' prompt the reader to re-evaluate each in the light of the other. The semantic instability continues in the description of the three musical powers, which themselves emphasize the waywardness of the verse they inhabit. They are 'FANCY', whose 'rosy fingers cull/ Fresh flow'rs and dews to sprinkle on the turf/ Where *Shakespeare* lies'; she seems to be the literary one. Next the poet asks 'FICTION', the painter, to

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[422] Chambers, *Cyclopædia: or, an universal dictionary of arts and science* in *ECCO*, vol. 2, p. 607.
[423] The significance of Platonic metaphysics to Akenside's thought is clear from the 'Commentary' and has long been noted by scholars. The idea that the lexical quibbling is done with clear intent is further supported by Karina Williamson's account of Akenside's intensive schooling in Classical Greek, which led to a lifelong enthusiasm for the 'antient' Greek poets to whom he refers in 'The Design'.

> come, upon her vagrant wings
> Wafting ten thousand colours thro' the air,
> Which by the glances of her magic eye,
> She blends and shifts at will thro' countless forms,
> Her wild creation.[424]

'Vagrant' – 'wandering, straying […] inconstant, wayward'[425] – and 'wild creation' evoke the fluid instability of verbal mimesis, and 'Fiction' here means both 'the action of fashioning or imitating' and 'the action of 'feigning' or 'inventing' 'whether for the purpose of deception or otherwise', which once again suggests that the poem may prove deceptive, and warns the reader to be on the alert.[426] Finally 'HARMONY', the most musical of the muses, is the one who summons their 'guardian', 'Majestic TRUTH', and 'her sister LIBERTY'.[427] Given the broad sense of 'musical' on which Akenside insists, Harmony may be taken in a similar sense, embodying the complex overlaps in aesthetic and physico-theological discourse so central to Shaftesburian aesthetics, and which will dominate the poem, as well as emphasizing the association of structural 'concord' with lyric tunefulness implicit in the ubiquitous Horatian *concordia discors*.[428] In Harmony, then, song and frame coexist.

(iv) Pleasure and Mirth

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[424] Ibid., Book I, ll. 14-18.
[425] *OED*, 'vagrant', definition B. *adj*. 2.
[426] *OED*, definitions 1.a; 3. In fact, 'Fiction' here takes on many of the characteristics of 'Phantasy' in 'The Poet; A Rhapsody'.
[427] Ibid., I, ll. 10-24.
[428] Thus, for instance, Francis Hutcheson's treatise on beauty in *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue in Two Treatises* develops Shaftesbury's aesthetics and schematizes Horace's *concordia discors* by defining beauty as a compound ratio of unity and variety. The intersection between the discourses of literary criticism and of theodicy is articulated for example in the familiar trope of nature as the book of God, which Akenside adopts in Book I of the poem: 'the sire omnipotent unfolds/ The world's harmonious volume, there to read/ The transcript of himself' (Akenside, 'The Pleasures of Imagination', I, ll. 99-101).

As noted earlier, the importance of the *Characteristics* to *The Pleasures of Imagination* is made explicit in Akenside's direct quotation of the text and his reference to its author as a noble philosopher. Likewise, the way in which Shaftesbury plays on the term miscellany provides a useful context for the quibble on 'musical'. The nature of these 'tactical difficulties' suggests further refinements to Stewart's insightful interpretation of Harmodius's allegory in Book II, which will connect it to the discussion of ridicule in Book III. The episode may be summarized as follows: the narrator retells a story he has heard from 'old' Harmodius, in which the latter describes how, as a young man, he was accosted by the 'Genius of human kind', who showed him in a vision an allegorical drama of a youth, 'the goddess' and 'the fair Euphrosyné'. The youth, spurning the goddess in favour of Euphrosyné, is punished with a visitation by the 'son of Nemesis', who only disappears when the youth declares that he will brave the monster if Euphrosyné returns to him.[429]

It is not clear at the start of the allegory exactly who or what 'the goddess' and Euphrosyné represent. The goddess is described as she

> from whose inspiration flows
> The toil of patriots, the delight of friends;
> Without whose work divine, in heav'n or earth,
> Nought lovely, nought propitious comes to pass (II, 381-82)

and Euphrosyné is her 'gay companion',

> the gentle queen
> Of smiles, and graceful gladness, and delights
> That chear alike the hearts of mortal men

[429] Akenside, 'The Pleasures of Imagination', II, ll. 187-771.

> And pow'rs immortal. (393-96)

The youth prefers Euphrosyné to her 'more sublime' 'heav'nly part'ner': she is eternally youthful, 'smiles eternal' flow 'from her candid eyes',

> And in her hand she wav'd a living branch
> Rich with immortal fruits, of pow'r to calm
> The wrathful heart, and from the bright'ning eyes
> To chase the cloud of sadness. (418-21)

This characterization, for all its descriptive detail, leaves in play exactly what quality Euphrosyné is meant to embody. However, at the end of the allegory, the Genius of Mankind fixes the moral of the story and identifies the goddess, the son of Nemesis, and Euphrosyné as Virtue, Pain, and Pleasure respectively:

> VIRTUE's awful steps, howe'er pursued
> By vexing fortune and intrusve PAIN,
> Should never be divided from her chast,
> Her fair attendant, PLEASURE. (673-76)

As Dix notes in his commentary, Euphrosyné is 'one of the graces', and her name means 'Mirth' or 'Cheerfulness'; more particularly, as we have seen, it alludes to Milton's description of the 'goddess fair and free', 'heart-easing Mirth'.[430] Dix adds that 'Akenside uses the personification to represent pleasure more generally'.[431] However, as with 'musical', I would suggest that here too, the particular and the general senses coexist, associating mirth and pleasure.

[430] Ibid., p. 454. Milton, 'L'Allegro', ll. 11-13.
[431] Ibid., p. 454.

Her Miltonic identity as the fair and free Mirth links Eurphosyné to the topic of Shaftesbury's 'Sensus Communis; an Essay Concerning the Freedom of Wit and Humour', in which he writes

> Let the solemn reprovers of vice proceed in the manner most suitable to their genius and character. I am ready to congratulate with them on the success of their labours in that authoritative way which is allowed them. I know not, in the meanwhile, why others may not be allowed to ridicule folly and recommend wisdom and virtue, if possibly they can, in a way of pleasantry and mirth. I know not why poets, or such as write chiefly for the entertainment of themselves and others, may not be allowed this privilege.[432]

Euphrosyné, one might say, represents both the liberty of mirth and pleasant harmony – aspects that also correlate with Shaftesbury's miscellany and harmony – and thereby 'recommends' the senior goddess, 'Virtue'. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the narrator of the tale, Harmodius, is described in the poem as a sage or teacher who 'hath weigh'd/ Within his learned mind whate'er the schools/ Of wisdom' or nature 'dictate of the law/ Which govern and support this mighty frame'.[433] Dix, however, identifies him as an Athenian tyrannicide, and reminds us that Akenside narrates his career in full in *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1772). Since his tyrannicide marks him out as a champion of liberty, the narrator of the vision is unlikely to be advocating meek submission to 'dictated' laws.

The implication, perhaps, is that the reader should claim the liberty of an independent elucidation of the allegory rather than passively accepting that provided by the 'Genius of Mankind'.[434] The narrative finishes quite abruptly at the end of Book II, where a long, strident condemnation of vice in its various guises by the Genius of

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[432] *Characteristics*, p. 62.
[433] Ibid., II, ll. 178-82.
[434] Ibid., p. 452.

Mankind reaches its climax without further comment by Harmodius or the poem's narrator, leaving the multiple narrative threads at a loose end. In the light of the above quotation from 'Sensus Communis', however, the Genius of Mankind may be recognized as one of the 'solemn reprovers of vice'. Akenside accordingly employs his poet's 'privilege' 'to ridicule folly and recommend wisdom and virtue […] in a way of pleasantry and mirth' in Book III, which opens with the controversial passage ridiculing moral incongruity and discord before turning to the mysterious 'kindred pow'r' which links or ties apparently 'discordant things' in the human mind. Thus the two facets of Euphrosyné reappear as the sense of ridicule and the association of ideas, and Book III provides an alternative, and more compelling, moral to the allegory.

These Shaftesburian resonances are all the more striking because the allegory itself, with the two female figures and the youth, is a subverted narrative version of the allegorical image presented and explicated in Shaftesbury's treatise 'A Notion of the *Historical Draught* or *Tablature* of the Judgment of *Hercules*', which was appended to the *Characteristics* in 1713.[435] In the treatise, Shaftesbury offers a minutely detailed set of instructions, intended for use by commissioned painters, regarding the most appropriate visual representation of the moral allegory of the 'Judgment of Hercules', in which the young Hercules is asked to choose between two goddesses, Virtue and Pleasure, and selects the former. As John Barrell argues, however, '[t]he choice Hercules must make is not between virtue and pleasure in a loose and general sense, but between

[435] Anthony Ashley Third Earl of Shaftesbury Cooper, 'A Notion of the Historical Draught, or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules', in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, vol. 3 of 3 (Indianopolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), pp. 1-210

civic, public virtue and private vice…And for that reason the picture must communicate with us *rhetorically*'.[436] Furthermore,

> The painting may be described as 'rhetorical' in a double sense: for if its function is to be an instructive 'memorandum', the choice which Hercules is being persuaded to make is a choice we too must make, and he is a figure for the spectator. Thus the painting must display the response made by Hercules to Virtue's oratory, a response which is an image of how we, too, must respond to the painting as a whole.[437]

Dustin Stewart's reading of Akenside's allegory, we recall, discovered a similarly recursive dynamic in the multiple frames-within-frames surrounding the tale, which present the reader with a 'tactical difficulty' of interpretation. By making *his* Pleasure a chastely attractive attendant on Virtue, and by conflating her with Milton's 'Mirth', Akenside responds to Shaftesbury in a highly complex fashion. Attenuating the moral distinction between Virtue and Pleasure/Mirth and instead making the latter subordinate to the former, Akenside seems to be using the Shaftesburian methods of raillery and miscellaneous (satirical and disjointed) commentary to critique Shaftesbury's own schematic notion of artistic representation and of its relation to virtue, whether civic or otherwise. Pleasure, as it were, has stepped out of the picture frame to 'rally' the viewers and invade the gentlemanly discourse designed to keep the allegorical figures, like the painter-artisan, in their places. Thus the 'Genius of Mankind', identifiable with Shaftesbury, is put in *his* place by means of ridicule.

The reverberations of this manoeuvre persist into the section on ridicule in Book III, which opens with an instruction to the reader to:

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[436] John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt* (New Haven; London: Yale UP, 1986), p. 29.
[437] Ibid., p. 30.

> See! in what crouds the uncouth forms advance;
> Each would outstrip the other, each prevent
> Our careful search, and offer to your gaze,
> Unask'd, his motley features. Wait awhile,
> My curious friends! and let us first arrange
> In proper order your promiscuous throng. (III, 78-83)

A dislocation occurs in the course of these lines, complicating the initial imperative. In them Akenside moves from the first person plural of 'our careful search' to the second person plural of 'your gaze', then shifts the pronoun to the ambiguous 'my curious friends', which might mean either the curious spectators or the curious specimens, to settle finally on the ridiculous in 'your promiscuous throng', an address that takes in the poem's readers. What follows is a series of 'paragraph tableaux', in which the various species of ridiculous persons are listed in what might be a virtuoso's museum catalogue or a procession of dunces. Thus, by means of a satirical trick used, as we have seen, by Pope in his *Essay on Man*, the parade of the ridiculous is made (in part) a mocking description of the poem's readers, in which they become identical with the ridiculous objects of their gaze. In a further witty slip, this impression extends to a Shaftesburian image of the miscellaneous throng *inside* the mind, which Akenside must discipline, classify and analyse as per his 'Design': after the last paragraph in the 'procession' the poet remarks 'Such are the various aspects of the mind –' (III, 278), which on first reading seems to refer to folly's train even though it more properly attaches to the lines that follow.

The ordering of the ridiculous into their different 'motley bands' allows the nature of folly to be perceived and understood by the faculty of ridicule, which is essentially the sense of incongruity:

> Where'er the power of ridicule displays
> Her quaint-ey'd visage, some incongruous form,
> Some stubborn dissonance of things combin'd,
> Strikes on the quick observer. (III, 350-52)

Only 'the quick observer' or reader who notices the incongruities of *The Pleasures of Imagination* will feel Akenside 'mirthful sting', and notice, for instance, when he or she is being included in folly's parade.[438] Thus, in this final book we are taught the skills which will enable us to go back and look over 'the most inviting parts', as Shaftesbury suggests in his 'Letter Concerning Enthusiasm', with a keener eye.

Retrospection is implicitly encouraged as the poem rises to a climactic close. If Mirth's pleasant wit points up the dissonance and incongruity of chaotic folly, then harmonious pleasure is an aspect of

> the grateful charm
> That searchless nature o'er the sense of man
> Diffuses, to behold, in lifeless things,
> The inexpressive semblance of himself,
> Of thought and passion. (III, 283-86)

The diffusive charm is the opposite of mirth's sting, imbuing 'discordant things' with 'a kindred pow'r' (307). The 'busy pow'r/ Of mem'ry' (348-9) is the primary manifestation of the associative power, preserving the bonds of 'diff'rent images of things/ By chance combined'(312-13) so that recollecting 'a song, a flow'r, a name' (339) takes the mind

[438] The theory behind this brief definition of ridicule as residing in incongruity and dissonance is expanded at length in the notes, and the earnest discussion overwhelming the poetry on p. 184 of the first edition is particularly reminiscent of the *Dunciad Variorum*. It is important also to note the flattery inherent in singling out the 'quick observer', a move which rewards readers' acuity yet perhaps also mocks them for identifying themselves as such.

> backward thro' her mazy walks
> Guiding the wanton fancy to her scope,
> To temples, courts or fields; with all the band
> Of painted forms, of passions and designs
> Attendant: whence, if pleasing in itself,
> The prospect from that sweet accession gains
> Redoubled influence o'er the list'ning mind. (III, 340-347)

This personified 'mem'ry' duly does, as, in yet another instance of lexical congruity, her name is an echo reminding us of the description of 'Memnon's image' in Book I. Thus, prompted by memory, the 'list'ning mind' of Book III hears 'redoubled' the remembered music of the harp as described in a passage where 'renown'd', 'repulsive' and 'responsive' mimic both sound and sense:

> old Memnon's image, long renown'd
> By fabling Nilus, to the quiv'ring touch
> Of Titan's ray, with each repulsive string
> Consenting, sounded thro' the warbling air
> Unbidden strains; even so did nature's hand
> To certain species of external things,
> Attune the finer organs of the mind:
> So the glad impulse of congenial pow'rs,
> Or of sweet sound, or fair-proportion'd form,
> The grace of motion, or the bloom of light,
> Thrills thro' imagination's tender frame,
> From nerve to nerve: all naked and alive
> They catch the spreading rays: till now the soul
> At length discloses every tuneful spring
> To that harmonious movement from without
> Responsive. (I, 109-124)

At length – across the distance separating these lines from their echo in Book III – the mother of the muses, memory, collects up the networks of associative links that crisscross the poem, and like Memnon's image, holds steady an imaginative frame which inspiration (re)awakens to song.

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My aim in this chapter has been to identify some of the features of *The Pleasures of Imagination* which seem to have been underplayed in recent criticism, and which help to explain why Pope, when Dodsley asked for advice on whether to pay the £120 Akenside was demanding for his manuscript, answered in the affirmative, asserting that 'this was no ordinary poem'.[439] Like other long non-narrative poems of the mid century, it concerns itself with questions of natural structure which intersect with broader contemporary debates regarding the theodicies implicit in – for example – Baconian, Lockean, neoplatonic or rationalist thought. However, in its self-reflexive focus on 'the pleasures of imagination', it ends up being as much about poetic structures as natural ones, and the teaching of philosophical truths becomes a lesson in reading 'imaginatively'.

Akenside approaches the problem of how to structure parts into a legible whole from an explicitly philosophical standpoint, aiming as he does to reunite philosophy with poetry in order to return it to its Golden Age glory, and he is acutely conscious of the kinds of effects the form of his poem might produce. I focused on his early poems and the works of Shaftesbury in order to provide context for my claim that wit is central to the poem, but they also prefigure the complex interplay between sense and form found in *The Pleasures of Imagination*. Wordplay allows Akenside to complicate his structure with 'tactical difficulty' and multiply the 'musical' resonances of words across the poetic frame, thereby bringing it that bit closer to the vast complexity of the natural world, which is both apparently chaotic and actually coherent, and extends, like the poem, in

[439] Dix, *The Literary Career of Mark Akenside*, p. 70.

both space and time. As in the *Characteristics* or Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* and *An Essay on Man*, the task of understanding the intricate formal patterns of *The Pleasures of Imagination* is part of its didactic purpose, and is designed to draw on the imagination but also the subordinate powers of ridicule and association, the better to 'enlarge and harmonize the imagination and by that means insensibly dispose the minds of men to a similar taste and habit of thinking in religion, morals, and civil life'.[440] Learning to read it, therefore, not only evokes pleasure but activates the reader's mind to freely engage in a search for truth and virtue.

[440] Akenside, 'The Design', p. 86.

CHAPTER FIVE
DRAWN-OUT REDEMPTION IN *NIGHT THOUGHTS*

Introduction

'I wish you would lessen your apprehensions of length. If all fixes, and satisfies attention, the longer the better.'[441] Thus Edward Young to his friend Samuel Richardson in response to the latter's concerns about the increasing amplitude of his novel-in-progress, *Clarissa*. Young's own prolix work, *The Complaint: or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, & Immorality*, is by far the longest of the non-narrative long poems under discussion, and at almost ten thousand lines it comes close to the *Aeneid*, which for many neoclassical critics had epitomized acceptable epic extension. It is unsurprising, then, that some early readers thought the poem too long. Anna Seward, in most respects an admirer of the poet, complained that

> Young's greatest literary fault[…] is not knowing where to stop; – but, after having uttered a sublime conception, ringing changes upon it, till its impressive force sinks, encumbered and weakened […] I sometimes long to lop and compress the Night Thoughts. If that could be judiciously done, a work might remain of unexcelled sublimity and poetic beauty in the sombre style; for the genius of their author was great and original.[442]

Others made similar objections even as they pointed out the poem's beauties; Samuel Pratt complained of its 'iterations', and Joseph Warton commented on Young's

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[441] No. 194, Young to Richardson, 17 July, 1746, Edward Young, *The Correspondence of Edward Young, 1683-1765*, ed. by Henry Pettit (Oxford; New York: Clarendon; OUP, 1972) [henceforth *Correspondence*], p. 234. Here and in further quotations from *The Correspondence* I expand the contractions and elide the errors which Pettit transcribes from the letters.

[442] Letter VIII, Seward to Mrs. Jackson, January 21, 1794, in Anna Seward, *The Letters of Anna Seward: Written Between the Years 1784 and 1897*, 6 vols (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable; London: Longman et al., 1811), iv, p. 36.

'bombast'.[443] William Shenstone, who in 1742 had described 'Night the first' as 'the best thing that has come out this season', on the publication of 'Night the fifth' (1743) diagnosed the continuation as a 'case' of 'wind in a great measure'.[444] Since the nineteenth-century disappearance of Young from the canon, few readers have felt compelled to offer any comment at all, but, reviewing his reputation in 1969, Isobel St. John Bliss finds that even taking into account modern misconceptions regarding eighteenth-century literary and social mores,

> Young does, of course, offer his own barriers to enjoyment in reading. The main one is the undue length of many of his writings – a length often because of prolixity, of repetition of an idea in metaphor after metaphor, resulting in and from a loose organization.[445]

Similarly, Blanford Parker describes the poem as 'the loosest, most repetitive, uninterpretable composite imaginable'.[446]

Such accounts, which explicitly or implicitly relate the poem's 'prolixity' to its 'loose organization', are arguably vindicated by the way in which it was produced, since it was composed and published piecemeal over a period of five years. Stephen Cornford writes that

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[443] Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, iv, p. 164; Samuel Jackson Pratt, *Observations on the Night Thoughts of Dr. Young; with Occasional Remarks on the Beauties of Poetical Composition. By Courtney Melmoth* (1776) in *ECCO* [accessed October 2009], p. 205; Warton, Joseph, *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*, 4th edn, 2 vols (1782), ii, p. 205, in *ECCO* [accessed October 2009]

[444] William Shenstone, *The Works, in Verse and Prose, of William Shenstone, Esq; Vol. III. Containing Letters to Particular Friends, from the Year 1739 to 1763*, 3 vols (1769) in *ECCO* [accessed June 2012], iii, pp. 81, 107. See also modern accounts of its early reception: Walter Thomas, *Le Poète Edward Young (1683-1765): Etude sur sa Vie et ses Œuvres* (Paris: Hachette, 1901), pp. 489-502; Harold Forster, 'The Centenaries of Edward Young', *BJECS*, 6:2 (1983), 149-58; Stephen Cornford's 'Introduction' to Young, *Night Thoughts* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989) [henceforth *Night Thoughts*], pp. 1-32 (21-22); Cheryl Wanko, 'The Making of a Minor Poet: Edward Young and Literary Taxonomy', *English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature*, Netherlands, 72:4 (1991), 355-67.

[445] Bliss, *Edward Young*, p. 155.

[446] Blanford Parker, *The Triumph of Augustan Poetics: English Literary Culture from Butler to Johnson* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), p. 221.

> *Night Thoughts* remains in essence a collection of distinct parts united by a common, reiterated theological theme […] The earlier parts were not revised in the light of later developments, and it was not even at Young's suggestion that all nine parts were collected into a consecutively-paged volume.[447]

'Night the first' appeared in the summer of 1742, and although Young had already started work on a second, and conceived of a series of three Nights, he does not seem to have had any detailed plan in mind for them.[448] Night IV (1743) was presented as potentially completing the series, and in a letter written while he was composing Night VIII (1744), he refers to this as the 'last'.[449] Publication was equally disjointed: the copyright for the earlier Nights changed hands at various points, and although Robert Dodsley was the main publishing agent for Nights I to VI, he declined to invest in further instalments, presumably due to falling sales; instead, George Hawkins published the final three, which were printed by Richardson. Thus while Dodsley issued a series of 'collected' editions of the first six Nights through to 1749, and Hawkins brought out two editions of 'Volume Two' (i.e. Nights VI-IX), it was only thanks to Richardson's encouragement that in December 1749 a full, nine-Night edition was finally published. To a much greater extent than *The Seasons* and *The Pleasures of Imagination*, then, the form of *Night Thoughts* reflects its protracted, fragmented genesis. Its length and repetitions might as such be a result of the gradual expansion of the work in response to continuing critical and commercial success: Young, one could argue, simply continued to replicate a successful formula for as long as there was a market for it.

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[447] Cornford, 'Introduction', pp. 29-30.
[448] Since they are parts of the poem like books or cantos, this and all future references to the Nights within the main text omit inverted commas.
[449] No. 150, Young to Richardson, 9 July, 1744, *Correspondence*, p. 182.

Night Thoughts itself offers alternative explanations. In the course of the poem Young echoes many lines from Pope, and in one passage explicitly compares himself to his more celebrated fellow author. In it, Pope is invoked as a predecessor compared to whom Young himself is unworthy of his task:[450]

> Dark, tho' not blind, like thee *Mœonides!*
> Or *Milton!* thee; ah cou'd I reach your Strain!
> Or *His*, who made *Mœonides* our *Own*.
> *Man* too he sung: *Immortal* man I sing;
> Oft bursts my Song beyond the bounds of Life;
> What, *now*, but Immortality can please?
> O had *He* prest his Theme, pursued his track,
> Which opens out of Darkness into Day!
> O had he mounted on his wing of Fire,
> Soar'd, where I sink, and sung *Immortal* man!
> How had it blest mankind? and rescued me? (I, 449-59)

The emphasis on 'man' suggests that the primary reference is to *An Essay on Man,* and several modern scholars have usefully examined the ways in which *Night-Thoughts* responds to and challenges the arguments of the *Essay*. Daniel Odell, for instance, focuses on *Night Thoughts*' explicit ambition to extend the topic from 'Man' to 'Immortal Man' and reads *Night Thoughts* for objections to the theodicy of the *Essay*.[451] Douglas Patey takes a different focus, comparing Young's 'concept of self' to Pope's, and ultimately finds the former wanting.[452] The value of these readings is that they make

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[450] Young was actually Pope's senior by several years, and Charlotte Crawford argues that Pope's epistolary satires of the 30s were in fact influenced by Young's widely admired satirical sequence, *The Love of Fame* (1725). Charlotte E. Crawford, 'What Was Pope's Debt to Edward Young?', *ELH*, 13:3 (Sep, 1946), 157-67.

[451] Odell, 'Young's Night Thoughts as an Answer to Pope's Essay on Man', *SEL*, 12:3 (1972), 481-501 (p. 484).

[452] Douglas Lane Patey, 'Art and Integrity: Concepts of Self in Alexander Pope and Edward Young', *Modern Philology: A Journal Devoted to Research in Medieval and Modern Literature*, 83:4 (1986), 364-78 (p. 378). See also John Sitter's essay 'Theodicy at Mid-century: Young, Akenside, and Hume',

clear some of the philosophical or theological differences between the two texts, but they don't go far in considering how Young engages with the formal aspects of *An Essay on Man*, which as I have argued offers a sophisticated and subtle form of instructive reading experience.

However, just as in *The Seasons* and *The Pleasures of Imagination*, the details of the apparently unremarkable invocation reveal some of the peculiarities of the work's purpose and method. First of all, it is worth noting that in addition to their immense critical stature, all three of the poets invoked are writers of epic: Homer, Milton and 'he who made *Mæonides* our own', that is, Pope as translator of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Thus when Young compares his theme to that of *An Essay on Man*, he seems to represent it, and his own poem, as works commensurate with canonical epic. As such, the scale of *Night Thoughts* is appropriate to its ambition.

Secondly, despite the modesty imposed by convention, it is telling that Young places himself among those who would benefit from a more skilled and inspired treatment of 'Life, Death and Immortality', as he returns in the last line to his putative situation as the poem's narrator: 'How had it blest mankind? and rescued me?' This grounds the poem anew in the personal, recalling its genesis in the 'Author's mind' as described in the poem's 'Preface', where Young writes that it 'differs from the common Mode of Poetry' because 'the Facts mentioned did naturally pour these moral Reflections on the Thought of the Writer.'[453] Through the transmission of individual experiential

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Eighteenth-Century Studies, 12 (1978), 90-106, where he approaches the poem as a straightforward 'theodicy', and thus like Odell and Patey occludes some of its more original aspects (p. 90).

[453] *Night Thoughts*, p. 37. This preface was initially printed at the front of the first edition of Night IV in 1743, before being moved to the front of the collected edition of the first four Nights which appeared later the same year. The final, shortened version, from which I quote, appeared in the third complete edition of the nine Nights, in 1751.

knowledge, then, Young aims at the end Pope *might* have achieved: to 'bless' mankind. That the result is represented as even a poor substitute for a text which, authored by Pope, could have 'rescued' the afflicted, suggests that in *Night Thoughts* Young intends to communicate the kind of moral value traditionally associated with the epic via private history. Recognizing this ambition and taking it seriously allows us better to understand the techniques by which Young attempted to fulfil it.

In addition to its epic aspirations, the poem suggests another rationale for its length, one that effectively represents an alternative to the theories of poetic instruction which I have argued are implicit in Pope's *Iliad*, *An Essay on Criticism* and *An Essay on Man*. Nonetheless, it may likewise be understood as informed by a poetics of greatness. As well as describing the poem as unduly lengthy, Bliss suggests that Young himself was conscious that readers might find it repetitive or excessive, citing lines from Night VII: 'BUT wherefore such Redundancy? Such Waste/ Of Argument?' (978) In fact, the poet asks this in the course of explaining to Lorenzo, the poem's 'infidel' *adversarius*, the 'Nature, Proof, and Importance, of Immorality'.[454] His many arguments, '*drawn from* MAN: *From his* Discontent; *from his* Passions, *and* Powers; *from the gradual Growth of* Reason; *from his Fear of* Death',[455] should be unnecessary, he claims, since

> One sets *my* Soul at Rest
> One obvious, and at Hand, and, Oh! – at Heart.
> So just the Skies, PHILANDER's Life so pain'd,
> His Heart so pure; *that*, or *succeeding* Scenes
> Have Palms to give, or ne'er had He been born. (VII, 980-83)

[454] See title-page to Night VII (1744), reproduced in *Night Thoughts*, p. 171.
[455] 'Contents' [of Night VII], in *Night Thoughts*, p. 177.

In other words, all the various defences of Christianity should be redundant, because the life and death of his friend (Lorenzo's father) offers the devout poet more immediate and emotionally striking evidence of man's immortality, as have the life and death of the characters mourned in earlier nights, the poet's wife and 'Narcissa'. For the sceptical infidel, however, 'redundancy' is required, and the poet will continue to proffer proofs, arguments and demonstrations, drawing out his discourse to a vast 'waste' that matches the immense and sublime importance of his themes, 'life, death and immortality'.

Thus, the very resistance that Lorenzo apparently makes to these pleas is, especially after Night IV, the primary impetus for the poem's extension, as the poet strives for a future, conditional victory. Indeed, the poem's eventual conclusion offers merely lyric or oratorical closure, since it is triggered not by Lorenzo's capitulation but by the author's weariness at being '[s]o long on Wing':

> Shall I, then, rise in Argument, and Warmth;
> And urge *Philander*'s posthumous Advice,
> From Topics yet unbroach'd –
> But Oh! – I faint! – My Spirits fail! – Nor Strange;
> So long on Wing, and in no middle Clime;
> To which my Great Creator's Glory call'd;
> And *calls* – but, now, in vain: *Sleep*'s dewy Wand
> Has strok'd my drooping Lids; and *promises*
> My long Arrear of Rest
> […]
> Man's rich Restorative; his balmy Bath,
> That supples, lubricates, and keeps in Play,
> The various Movements of this nice Machine,
> Which asks such frequent Periods of Repair.
> When tir'd with vain Rotations of the Day,
> *Sleep* winds us up for the succeeding Day,
> Fresh we spin on, till *Sickness* clogs our Wheels,
> Or *Death* quite breaks the Spring, and Motion ends. (IX, 2173-93)

For a moment, the reader is threatened with further arguments 'yet unbroach'd' relating to Philander, but the energy needed to speak for the immortal dead has been exhausted, a Christianized lyric trope which recalls the close of John Dennis's *Te Deum* paraphrase. The mechanisms of 'poetical enthusiasm' or religious sublimity inaugurated by Dennis are visible in other aspects of this passage too: the emphasis on force (or rather, on the lack of it) and motion; the Miltonic flight and semantically congruous enjambment of '*promises*/ My long Arrear of Rest'; and the 'Play' of the 'nice Machine' combined with the 'succeeding Day', which recalls Dennis's description of sublime poetry as a repeated and extended – 'successive' – play of energy that works upon the passions or affections.

As in Dennis's theories of poetry, time is paramount in the Nights, which one by one mark off individual spans of mortal existence during which redemption might be achieved. As for Dennis, also, the constructed artefact is emblematic of the divine and, accordingly, the verse Nights simultaneously represent miniature replicas of the apocalypse. In the very last lines of the poem, the poet once more urges

> LORENZO! rise, at this auspicious Hour;
> An Hour, when Heaven's most intimate with Man;
> […]
> Awake, then: Thy PHILANDER calls: Awake!
> Thou, who shalt wake, when the Creation sleeps;
> When, like a Taper, all these Suns expire;
> When TIME, like Him of *Gaza* in his Wrath,
> Plucking the Pillars that support the World,
> In NATURE's ample Ruins lies entomb'd;
> And MIDNIGHT, *Universal* Midnight! reigns. (IX, 2422-34)

As the poet presumably sinks back to rest, the night-long span of the utterance just completed becomes an instructive 'type' of the full span of mortal, pre-apocalyptic time

which ends with 'MIDNIGHT, *Universal* Midnight!' on earth and the reawakening of the just to new life.

These addresses to Lorenzo and the invocation to Pope suggest that, as for *The Seasons* and *The Pleasures of Imagination*, extension is central to the meaning and effect of *Night Thoughts*. In what follows I argue that the length and repetitiveness, however irksome to readers past and present, are intended to facilitate the work's didactic mission. Examination of texts with which Young would have been familiar will show that in Anglican devotional works both length and repetition were understood to have cognitive value, gradually tuning the mind to a perpetual consciousness of divine truths. Just as Young suggests in his comment to Richardson (quoted at the start of the chapter) 'attention' is also key to this process, and in order to engage the reader for the full, daunting span of the work, affective impact is crucial. The combined requirement of metrical or temporal quantity and affective intensity not only clarifies the function of the narrator's triple bereavement, but also helps to explain some of the more striking features of Young's prosody and rhetoric, particularly the way in which lines and verse paragraphs are arranged within the poem.

(i) Repeated in time: apocalyptic consciousness and Anglican devotion

The devotional tenor of *Night Thoughts* is, of course, hard to miss, and modern scholars have paid close attention to Young's doctrinal and confessional affiliations. Bliss carefully locates the poem within the context of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Anglican apologetics. She notes its use of Newtonian arguments for the existence of God and its apparently orthodox repudiation of atheism and deism, demonstrating that the

arguments in Nights VI, VII and VIII follow those of Bishop Gastrell's 1725 treatise, *Moral Proofs of the Certainty of a Future State*. However, her definition of *Night Thought*s as a 'rationalistic defence of religion' does not engage with the way in which the apologetics are embodied in a sublime poem – rather than a prose sermon – such that Young's 'arguments' rely as much on the aesthetic and affective impact of their expression as on their intrinsic logic.[456] Extracting the theology leaves unexamined the poem's didactic method and rhetorical premises. As a result, many of the strangest and most striking aspects of *Night Thoughts* are elided, or dismissed as unfortunate misjudgments on Young's part. In this section, therefore, I aim to expand the contextual field of the work's composition, looking at various religious and secular texts that Young would have been familiar with, and that not only offer arguments for the truth of Christian doctrine but also embody theories of devotional instruction.

In this respect, one of the most provocative modern readings of *Night Thoughts* is that of Blanford Parker in his study of early- and mid-eighteenth-century poetry, *The Triumph of Augustan Poetics*. In it, he combines compelling insights into the texture and style of the verse, the kind of approach it demands of the reader, and the religious sentiment that underpins these features, with rather less convincing claims. Thus, for instance, he draws attention to some of the poem's most characteristic thematic, rhetorical and stylistic features, noting its 'supreme *kenosis* or emptying out of the Augustan field of natural objects', its 'slow unfolding' and its 'mixture of witty apothegm and ponderous meditation'.[457] These features are, for Parker, a function of the work's fideism, that is the 'doctrine according to which all (or some) knowledge depends upon

[456] Isabel St John Bliss, '*Night Thoughts* in Relation to Contemporary Christian Apologetics', *PMLA*, 49 (1934), 37-70 (p. 37).
[457] *The Triumph of Augustan Poetics*, pp. 221, 226, 227.

faith or revelation, and reason or the intellect is to be disregarded'.[458] However, this doctrinal classification is authoritatively rejected by Odell in his more considered assessment of the poem; Parker, he explains 'overlooks clear evidence from the poem showing Young's literal belief in analogy as a sure guide, whether in arguments from nature to the immortality of the soul or to the existence of God, and from revelation to the intellectual world.'[459] Similarly, the recent studies of eighteenth-century enthusiasm and of the religious sublime by John Morillo and others provide ample evidence to counter Parker's claim that in *Night Thoughts*, '[f]or the first time since the early poems of Norris, Christian enthusiasm is again a virtue', and that in its rejection of 'the canons of Augustan taste' it 'is as purely inexplicable as any greatly popular and influential work in English'.[460]

The problems with Parker's analysis stem from his sense that orthodox Anglicanism is incompatible with the use of arguments from design: 'the religious imagination' of the first half of the eighteenth century, he argues, 'found itself at a crossroads. For some the solution was a gradual abandonment of orthodoxy for either physico-theology or deism.'[461] In this period, then, 'nature has been lost to theology' and 'naturalized analogies […] no longer held emotional value in a Christian context.'[462] Furthermore, Parker rejects any evidence that might counter his claim that '[i]t was not until Smart (and even more effectively in Wordsworth) that these two modes – biblical sublime and physico-naturalism – were effectively combined.'[463] As Odell's arguments

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[458] *OED*.
[459] Daniel W. Odell, 'Young's Night Thoughts: Christian rationalism or fideism?', *English Language Notes,* 43:1 (2005), 48-59, pp. 50-1.
[460] *The Triumph of Augustan Poetics*, pp. 222, 221, 226.
[461] *The Triumph of Augustan Poetics*, p. 196.
[462] Ibid., p. 226.
[463] Ibid., p. 202.

make clear, however, Young (whom Parker finds impeccably orthodox) in fact offers a perfect example of how mid-century Anglicans could be committed to modern analogical arguments from design.

Nonetheless, when Parker asserts that Young's primary inspiration 'was the catechism, Ecclesiastes, and the *Book of Common Prayer*', the claim is helpful because it reminds us that although arguments from design and other kinds of Christian apologetics clearly inform parts of *Night Thoughts*, especially those aimed at arguing Lorenzo out of his deistic and atheistic opinions, other types of religious literature might prove equally important when it comes to illuminating the rhetorical and prosodic characteristics of the poem.[464] Parker's selection therefore provides a useful starting point for considering the didactic rhetoric of *Night Thoughts* in relation to the religious practices and exercises which would have governed much of Young's life, from his school days at the college attached to Winchester Cathedral to his eventual election in 1730 to the living of Welwyn parish in Hertford, where by all accounts he carried out his pastoral duties conscientiously for as long as his health would permit.

The Anglican catechism's dialogic structure and its measured, incantatory rhythms not only facilitate the memorization of core doctrine but are designed for regular, repeated public performance.[465] Similarly, chapter three of the book of Ecclesiastes depicts human existence as a temporal, ceremonial order of fitting actions or events: 'To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven' (3:1). It renders the individual communal by representing private events and experiences as

[464] Ibid., p. 226.
[465] A note to the catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer* specifies that 'The Curate of every Parish shall diligently upon Sundays and Holy-days, after the second Lesson at Evening Prayer, openly in the Church instruct and examine so many Children of his Parish […] in some part of this Catechism' (p. 191).

archetypal, and the single life is shown to be part of a wider millenarian history, an argument that is carried by its refrain-like repetitions. Likewise, the 1662 prayer book, as Diarmaid MacCulloch writes, 'is a piece of theatre designed to be performed by an entire people, week by week, day by day'.[466] Orchestrated in the first instance by members of the clergy, but also by private individuals in their own homes, the diurnal cycle of lessons, psalms and prayers is designed to 'stir up the dull mind of man to the remembrance of his duty to God'.[467]

Aside from these core texts, Young would have been familiar with other works which similarly promote the extended repetition of meditative thought and speech as a way of inculcating awareness of the divine and preparing the soul for futurity. As the son of a prominent Anglican bishop, and a student at a cathedral college in the 1690s, he would have benefited from the Restoration Church's renewed commitment to Anglican piety which was based on the Book of Common Prayer but was supplemented by numerous prayer manuals and devotional guides tailored to all classes and demographics which had flooded the market from the 1660s onwards.[468] Schoolboys were also well catered for, with numerous catechisms specially designed for children and young adults.

However, one text in particular is likely to have been read attentively by Young. In 1674 Thomas Ken, for a time bishop of Winchester and head of its school, published

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[466] Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'Introduction', in *The Book of Common Prayer: 1662 Version* (London: David Campbell, 1999), pp. ix-xxiv (p. ix).
[467] Ibid., p. 12.
[468] My account here is based on John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven; London: Yale UP, 1991), pp. 331-47. For late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century religious publishing see Isabel Rivers, 'Religious Publishing', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: 1695-1830*, ed. by Michael F. Suarez and Michael L. Turner, vol. V (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), pp. 579-600 (p. 579). See also Ian Green, *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c. 1530-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), which describes the bewilderingly extensive range of catechisms produced between the Reformation and the early eighteenth century, and supplies a useful finding list (pp. 573-751).

the highly successful *A Manual of Prayers for the Use of the Scholars of Winchester College*.[469] The numerous editions of the *Manual* that appeared both before and during Young's time as a pupil at the school suggest that it was indeed employed as a teaching tool, and it is effectively a child-friendly supplement to the *Book of Common Prayer*.[470] It opens with 'An Exhortation to Young Philotheus', and the entire manual is presented as kindly advice given to this fictional pupil by his instructor, 'directions which are designed to teach you to fear the Lord from your youth, and are suited to your particular Age and Condition'; earnest entreaty and gentle remonstrance are its dominant rhetorical modes.[471]

A number of features make Ken's a particularly interesting pre-text to *Night Thoughts*. Most striking, perhaps, are the last two of the three hymns that were added in the 1695 edition, 'An Evening Hymn' and a 'Midnight Hymn'. In the first, retiring to bed is made a reassuring and instructive emblem of death, as the hymnist asks God to 'Teach me to live, that I may dread/ The Grave as little as my Bed;/ Teach me to die, that so I may/ Triumphing rise at the last day.[472] Furthermore, rest is welcomed as a way of replenishing devotional fervour:

> O may my Soul on thee repose,
> And with sweet sleep mine Eye-lids close;

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[469] Thomas Ken, *A Manual of Prayers for the Use of the Scholars of Winchester College.* (1674). The first four editions (1674-79) were 'printed for John Martyn' and all bear the same title. However, Charles Brome appears to have taken over as publishing agent in 1681, at which point 'And all other Pious Christians' is added to the title, presumably as a means of expanding its readership. In 1695, more substantial material was added, 'three hymns for *Morning*, *Evening*, and *Midnight*; not in any previous Editions: by the same Author'; all my quotations are taken from this edition.

[470] Young attended the school from 1695 to 1702. The *ESTC* lists separate editions or imprints for 1674, '75, '77, '79, '81, '84, '86, '87, '92, '95, '97, 1700 and 1703; new editions continued to appear throughout the eighteenth century. Ken's single sheet of *Directions for Prayer* (1686) and longer *An Exposition on the Church-Catechism, or the Practice of Divine Love* (1685) were also popular; see Spurr, p. 339.

[471] Ken, *A Manual of Prayers* (1695), p. 6.

[472] Ken, 'An Evening Hymn', in *A Manual of Prayers* (1695), pp. 144-8 (p. 145).

> Sleep that may me more vig'rous make,
> To serve my God when I awake.[473]

In case sleep proves elusive, the hymn also protects the youth against fear by petitioning for 'night thoughts' with which to fill any insomniac hours:

> When in the night I sleepless lye,
> My Soul with Heavenly thoughts supply,
> Let no ill dreams disturb my rest,
> No powers of darkness me molest.[474]

Such thoughts are supplied in 'A Midnight Hymn', which is designed to be sung when 'Sleep does [him] forsake', fits psalmodic praise to the occasion, and joyfully anticipates death as a permanent parting from temporal night:

> I now awake do with you joyn,
> To praise our God in Hymns divine:
> With you in Heav'n I hope to dwell,
> And bid the night and world farwell.
>
> My Soul, when I shake off this dust,
> Lord, in thy Arms I will entrust;[475]

Since sleeplessness thus becomes an opportunity for devotion, the singer aspires to more extended wakefulness:

> Blest Jesu, thou on Heav'n intent,
> Whole nights hast in Devotion spent,
> But I, frail Creature, soon am tir'd,
> And all my Zeal is soon expir'd.
>
> My Soul how can'st Thou weary grow,

[473] Ken, 'A Midnight Hymn', in *A Manual of Prayers* (1695), p. 146.
[474] Ibid., p. 146.
[475] Ibid., pp. 148-151 (pp. 148-9).

> Of Antedating Heav'n below,
> In sacred Hymns, and Divine Love,
> Which will eternal be above?[476]

The analogies between rest and eternal rest, and between waking and waking to immortal night, are commonplace, as is the conceit of lyric exhaustion. However, given the trope of sleeplessness and the likelihood of Young having encountered the manual as a schoolboy, the hymn cycle may reasonably be proposed as a precedent for *Night Thoughts*, in which the poet starts his song in 'Night I' with an invocation to 'Tir'd nature's sweet Restorer, balmy Sleep' and, as we have seen, keeps on singing for nine sleepless nights until his strength fails and, after one last enthusiastic sally, restorative rest presumably returns to him.[477]

As such, the didactic theory expressed in the manual, while in many respects similar to many other devotional works of the time, offers particularly helpful contextual evidence for elucidating the instructive logic of *Night Thoughts*. It contains prayers and catechisms for most of the moments and occasions provided for by the *Book of Common Prayer* (which it frequently quotes and paraphrases), and further fills in the student's timetable of week-day study and Sabbath devotion with detailed instructions for occupying the mind at the time of rising, of reading, of eating, of going to bed, of waking in the night, of preparing for communion and confession, and during all the 'vacant minutes' in between.[478] Time, clearly, is of the essence, and in the opening 'Exhortation to Young Philotheus' the student is urged to 'dedicate your tender years to His glory' in order to 'accustom your self to bear Christs yoke from your youth' so that it 'will sit easy

[476] Ken, 'A Midnight Hymn', in *A Manual of Prayers* (1695), p. 150.
[477] Young, *Night Thoughts*, I, l. 1.
[478] Ken, *A Manual* (1695), p. 101.

on your neck; for your duty will grow natural to you by beginning betimes.'[479] Custom or familiarity produced by repeated practice, combined with the child's developing maturity, allow the cumulative increase of this devotional burden; '[w]hen you have attained to more knowledge and proficiency and grace […] God then expects more from you; and 'tis high time for you, good Philotheus, to lengthen your Prayers'.[480] As time progresses, the prayers are extended, gradually filling up the student's waking hours. Ken explains,

> Prayer, good Phil.[otheus], is the very life of a Christian, and therefore we are so frequently commanded to pray without ceasing: Not that we can be always on our knees, but that we should accustom our selves to frequent thoughts of God, that wheresoever we are, he sees us; and when we think on God, we should have always an Ejaculation ready to offer up to him, and by this means we may pray, not only seven times a day with David, but all the day long.[481]

Thus, by dint of constant, repeated practice, the length of the prayer approaches the length of the day, which becomes overlaid with ideas of the divinely great and the eternal.

As the poem's concluding analogy between 'Universal Midnight' and the poet's 'midnight' suggests, a similar logic may be discovered in *Night Thoughts*. Like Ken's *Manual*, the poem makes time a central motif, especially in Night II, which is subtitled 'On Time, Death, Friendship'. In it, the poet emphasizes that mortal beings exist within a circumscribed time-span, and must contend with its limited mortal perspective:

> How dim our eye!
> The present Moment terminates out sight;

[479] Ken, *A Manual* (1695), pp. 3-4.
[480] Ibid., p. 17.
[481] Ibid., p. 26.

> Clouds thick as Doomsday, drown the *next*;
> We penetrate, we prophesy in vain.
> *Time* is dealt out by Particles; and each,
> E'er mingled with the streaming sands of Life,
> By Fate's inviolable oath is sworn
> Deep silence, "Where Eternity begins." (II, 362-369)

These lines assert mortal time's discontinuity, the impossibility of putting together the divine plan across the span of years and predicting the last day. However, the disconnection of one mortal moment from the next is merely part of the fragmented view of the infidel; thus, when Lorenzo excuses his absorption in 'trifles' by pleading the need to fill 'Time's numerous blanks', the narrator replies 'From whom those *Blanks* and *Trifles*, but from thee?/ No Blank, no Trifle Nature made, or meant' and, like Ken, recommends the practice of 'Virtue', which 'leaves/ In *Act* no Trifle, and no *Blank* in Time'.[482] Thus, like the *Manual*, one of the functions of *Night Thoughts* is to fill the blank time of worldly men (who resemble the 'blanks' of *The Spectator*) with virtue and thoughts of 'life, death, and immortality', thereby 'enriching' the heart. The poem itself is designed accordingly.

(ii) Writing on the heart

To recognize the *Book of Common Prayer* and Anglican devotional texts like Ken's *Manual* as sources for the themes and concerns of *Night Thoughts* not only helps to clarify the type of didactic role that repetition extended through time or across the page might be intended to play in the poem, but allows us to return to the negative effects of length that Young seems aware of when he comments on the poem's 'redundancy' in Night VII. The schoolboy in the *Manual* is enjoined to fill his day with prayer and his

[482] Young, *Night Thoughts*, II, ll. 77, 79-80, 82-83.

mind with thoughts of God, but Ken also makes clear that it takes time to acquire the mental discipline which will allow him to do so. In this sense, developing 'attention' is crucial, especially when 'reading Holy Scripture', for which Philotheus is advised to prepare by praying 'so to help me now at this time to read, and understand, and remember, and practise thy Word, that it may make me wise to Salvation'.[483] Attention here mainly takes the form of affective engagement: 'read with attention and humility and endeavour a much as you can, to suit your affections to the subject you read.' Thus, Ken suggests, '[i]f you read any of God's threatenings against Sinners, or his Judgments on them, they should excite in you a fear to provoke him […] When you read any of his gracious Promises, they should encourage and quicken your Obedience', and so on.[484] By this process, Scripture is brought to life.

The role of 'the affections' in attracting the attention of wandering minds is paramount in a whole range of religious literature in the period, and Young's own father, a religious controversialist and Church of England clergyman whose career and writings influenced John Wesley, delivered and published numerous sermons which encourage concentrated contemplation of scriptural passages 'in the heart' by a process that combines rational and affective engagement.[485] His son, however, only ever published three sermons, in 1728, 1729, and 1758; thus, during his years as parson of Welwyn his publications were more or less limited to secular genres.[486] One reason for this might

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[483] Ibid., p. 22.
[484] Ibid., pp. 22-3.
[485] V. E. Chancellor, 'Young, Edward (1641/2-1705)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. For the sermons see for e.g. 'A Sermon Concerning the Holy Contemplative', in Edward Young, senior, *Sermons on Several Occasions*, 2 vols. (1706) in *ECCO* [accessed May 2012], vol. ii, pp. 158-195.
[486] Edward Young, *A Vindication of Providence: or, a True Estimate of Human Life. In which the Passions are Consider'd in a New Light*, 2 vols (1728); ---, *An Apology for Princes, or the Reverence Due to Government.* (1729), and ---, *An Argument Drawn from the Circumstances of Christ's Death, for the Truth of His Religion* (1758).

have been his own experience of the inefficacy of traditional sermons at recalling straying sinners to the pastoral flock; a short biography of Young in the *Annual Register* for 1764 describes how

> [o]ne Sunday preaching in office at St. James's, he found that, though he strove to make his audience attentive, he could not prevail. Upon which his pity for their folly got the better of all decorums, and he sate back in the pulpit, and burst into a flood of tears.[487]

As no source is provided for this rather unlikely anecdote it may well be apocryphal, but Young himself expressed a sense of the limitations of sermons as a means of converting the undevout and the infidel. In a letter to his friend and patron the Duchess of Portland he notes that 'a good sermon is a most rational, & high entertainment to those [that] are so Happy as to have a relish for it', but adds that there are also 'those that have no very favourable opinion' of it.[488]

This sentiment reflects a wider change in the standing of religious literature in the first half of the eighteenth century. As Brian Young suggests, the problem was partly related to the ongoing expansion of the book trade and the resulting intensification of competition from other genres, so that by the mid century, 'theological books were increasingly being composed with a strong sense of the competing attractions offered by novels, poems and plays, a situation to which writers reacted in different ways'.[489] Young's response was to write his religion as poetry, a secular genre which he perhaps thought would offer more attractions to the Lorenzos of the world than the devotional

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[487] Anon., 'The Life of the Late Celebrated Dr. Edward Young', *Annual Register,* 8 (Dec 1765), 31-36, in *Bodleian Library Internet Library of Early Journals* http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/ilej [accessed February 2010], pp. 35-6.
[488] Letter No. 127, Young to the Duchess of Portland, 12 December, 1742, *Correspondence*, p. 150.
[489] Brian Young, 'Theological Books from *The Naked Gospel* to *Nemesis of Faith*', in *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays*, ed. by Isabel Rivers (London and New York: Leicester UP, 2001), pp. 79-104 (pp. 83-4).

texts of his school days or the volumes of sermons published by his father. In his earliest religious poems, the transfer from sermon to secular verse is effected by means of religious sublimity in the manner of Dennis, Blackmore, Watts and Hill, with a strong emphasis on divine retribution, violence and destruction. The most successful of these, *The Last Day. In Three Books* (1713), is very much the product of its time, reflecting the contemporary trend for religious verse paraphrase. The biblical account of the apocalypse, in which God's power is displayed at its most powerful and absolute, was an obvious choice for a sublime poem, and in the same year 'On the Last Day and the Happiness of the Saints in Heaven' by Nicholas Rowe appeared in Curll's *Sacred Miscellanies,* covering many of the same subjects.[490] Clearly, Young's poem is not especially original in theme; as Harold Foster notes, it is also uneven, with passages of clumsy bathos and wooden versification alongside more successful flights of enthusiasm.[491] Nonetheless, it remained popular long after biblical paraphrase had gone out of fashion and was frequently appended to posthumous editions of *Night Thoughts*; as such, it is a useful pre-text.

The earlier poem's moralizing is achieved by exciting religious enthusiasm in the reader, whether through sublime utterance or the depiction of sublime phenomena, and, following Dennis's prescriptions, it repeatedly uses metaphors of physical movement to describe the effect of the religious sublime on both the external senses and the internal faculties, the heart and the soul. In the dedication, Young asserts that from the 'first Mention' his subject 'Snatches away the Soul [of the reader] to the Borders of

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[490] *Sacred Miscellanies: or Divine poems. Upon Several Subjects*, ed. by Edward Curll (1713) in *ECCO* [accessed May 2012]
[491] Harold Forster, *Edward Young: the Poet of the Night Thoughts, 1683-1765* (Alburgh: Erskine Press, 1986), p. 31.

Eternity'.[492] The narrator's own response to the challenge of his theme is described in terms of its effect on the heart: ''Twixt Joy and Pain I view the bold Design,/ And ask my anxious heart if it be Mine;'[493] These reactions mirror the motions effected by the Lord's might within the narrative of the poem; as mankind realizes that the day of judgment has arrived, 'dreadful Pangs the trembling Heart invade'.[494] Thus, in the face of sublime phenomena, the poem's characters, narrator and, implicitly, its readers are effectively rendered permeable and malleable as their hearts or souls are moved, shaken or marked by the divine force of temporal change.

The power of divine truth to impress itself upon the soul also provides the basis for self-improvement by the reader in the absence of the real physical stimuli attending the actual apocalypse. Thus, in order to avoid joining the company of the damned on the 'last day' the narrator advises the 'pre-creation' of its events as a picture in the mind in a manner that echoes Ken's advice in the *Manual*:

> When guilty Joys invite us to their arms
> The Conscious Soul would This Great Scene display,
> […]
> Such deep Impression would the Picture make,
> No Pow'r on Earth her firm Resolve could shake'[495]

In *The Last Day*, however, the biblical context of impending finality adds an urgency and authority to the poem's admonitions, as though apocalypse were really at hand, and time for repentance about to run out. At the apocalypse all Creation expires, and finally, as time ends, Death himself is 'wrapt in Chains' 'and on the Point of his own Arrow

[492] 'Dedication' in Young, *A Poem on the Last Day*.
[493] Young, *A Poem on the Last Day*, I, p. 2.
[494] Ibid., I, p. 12.
[495] Ibid., I, p. 8.

dyes'.[496] The poem, by impressing on readers these sublime events, aims to remove the fear of death by making them conscious of coming 'glory' in terms that once again recall the *Manual*:

> In Hopes of Glory to be quite Involv'd!
> To smile at Death! to long to be Dissolv'd!
> From our Decays a Pleasure to receive!
> And kindle into Transport at a Grave!
> What equals This?[497]

Although in *Night Thoughts* 'Scripture' itself is no longer the ultimate authority of the narrator's words as it was in the paraphrase, the image of scripture as a means of 'impression' survives.

In Shaun Irlam's paradigm, poetic inscription is a prophetic act of exegesis which reconfigures the world within a new representation; in *Night Thoughts*, however, the act of writing is designed to reach beyond the text.[498] The poem's emotive exclamations set up a relation with its readers, moving beyond the boundaries of the text to achieve an affective transcription whereby divine truth is written into the heart to redeem the individual. In 'Night IV' the narrator proclaims, echoing the gospels, that Christ

> writes
> My Name in Heaven, with that inverted Spear
> (A Spear deep-dipt in Blood!) which pierc'd his Side,
> And open'd there a Font for all Mankind. (IV, 312-16)

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[496] Young, *The Last Day*, II, p. 41.
[497] Ibid., I, p. 16-17.
[498] Irlam, *Elations: the Poetics of Enthusiasm in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, pp 171-200.

Later in the same 'Night', the narrator takes on some of the functions of Christ, and although 'bleeding' ink rather than blood, becomes both transcript and proclaimer of divine power: 'Praise I a distant Deity? He tunes/ My Voice (if tun'd;) the Nerve, that writes, sustains;/ Wrap'd in his Being, I resound his Praise' (IV, 400-402). Just as the author of Revelation declares 'I will write the name of my God upon' 'Him that overcometh', the narrator's declared desire, the conversion of the infidel Lorenzo, requires that he write the name of *his* Christian God into Lorenzo's body or heart in order to bring him within the fold of the redeemed. As in *The Last Day*, the empiricist image of the impressionable mind is transferred to the 'heart' and its emotions, and the scriptural authority of the earlier poem is revived as transmission of script.

The Last Day, then, shows Young working out a theory of textual efficacy that is later put into practice in *Night Thoughts*. What changes is the stage on which these elements appear: in the later poem, Young encapsulates the public, collective realm of biblical chronicle and prophecy within a personal, intimate history reminiscent of spiritual autobiography. In effect, he returns to the devotional texts of his schooldays, recreates the closeted, darkened world of Ken's hymns, and reformulates the diurnally extended, repetitive and emotional 'ejaculations' and exhortations of Philotheus's prayers for a secular genre and an adult audience. As we have seen, engaging the affections and thereby awakening the consciences of those who, like Lorenzo, are unwilling to pass through the church door or engage with devout texts, is central to the aim of *Night Thoughts*. The change in setting and focus is part of this project.

For Young, as for many others in this period, one of the most effective ways of moving the apostate to devotion was via exemplary Christian lives and, particularly,

deaths. He found particular instruction, for instance, in the life and death of Addison, which he celebrated in his 1717 verse epistle *A Letter to Mr. Tickell* as more morally beneficial than the author's literary legacy.[499] Young's belief in the power of human example also seems to have motivated his enthusiasm for the works of Richardson, whose novel *Pamela* he read in 1741, drolly confiding to the Duchess of Portland that '[i]f I had not had the misfortune of coming into the world half a century too soon, I should have strove to have formed my Life on Her Example'.[500] The value of heightening the effect of such examples by creating lives and deaths to measure might also have been suggested by Elizabeth Singer Rowe's 1730 collection *Friendship in Death. Letters from the Dead to the Living*, which she dedicated to Young, and in which the fictional deceased recount their (sensationally eventful) lives and offer advice to the living from beyond the grave.

The fact that Rowe's characters were dead was crucial to the affective impact of their narratives, and the deceased have similar value in *Night Thoughts*. A frontispiece introduced in 1743 represents this exemplarity in visual terms.[501] It is a naturalistic 'night-piece' set in a churchyard, with the church in the right-hand middle ground and a figure kneeling by three graves in the foreground to illustrate the 'occasion' of the poem,

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[499] Edward Young, *A Letter to Mr. Tickell. Occasion'd by the Death of the Right Honourable Joseph Addison.* (1719). Addison's exemplary death is also the topic of a later work; see ---, *Conjectures on original composition. In a letter to the author of Sir Charles Grandison. By Edward Young, L. L. D. Author of Night Thoughts.* (London: A. Millar and R. and J. Dodsley, 1759), pp. 99-111.

[500] No. 102, Young to the Duchess of Portland, 18 February, [?1740/1], *Correspondence*, p. 116.

[501] See reproduction overleaf. On the basis of searches on *ESTC* and *ECCO*, I believe this frontispiece first appears in 1743 or 1744 in a range of reprints and new editions published by Dodsley, including what appears to be a reprint of Night I, the newly-published 'Night the Fifth' and collected editions of Nights I-IV and I-VI. It is reproduced here courtesy of *ECCO* from a copy of the 1743 (reprint?) edition of *The Complaint; or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, & Immortality* (1743) [which contains Night I only] held by the Department of Special Collections, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas. *ECCO* <http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=cambuni&tabID=Too1&docID=CW33253511682&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FACSIMILE> [accessed July 2012]. Gale Document Number CW3323511682.

the narrator's 'complaint' at his triple bereavement. The ever-bright consolations of Christianity are suggested by the luminous prominence of the crucifix at the top of the church spire, which is highlighted by the moon and placed in relief by the darkness of the night-sky which dominates the upper half of the picture. However, the gaze of the mourner, focused on the graves, is turned away from the church and its darkened entrance. Instead, his arm leaning on the largest of the three stones, he pores over an epitaph. Although the mourner in the frontispiece ignores the church, therefore, his reading of the epitaph offers another avenue by which divine wisdom might enter his consciousness. In *Night Thoughts* tombstones outdo clergymen as the poet exhorts Lorenzo to

> read with me *Narcissa*'s Stone;
> (*Narcissa* was thy Favourite) let us read
> Her moral Stone; few Doctors preach so well.
> Few Orators so tenderly can touch
> The feeling Heart. What *Pathos* in the Date? (III, 317-321)

The poet as emissary of the dead transmits their moving histories, and the silent, figurative voice of text vibrates not through the body but through the heart and soul. In Night III, not only the textual epitaph but the grave itself speaks:

> The Grave, like fabled *Cerberus*, has op'd
> A Triple Mouth; and in an awful Voice,
> Loud calls my Soul, and utters All I sing. (VII, 1259-61)

It is this compelling and above all emotionally moving voice that is to fix the attention of the poem's readers.

(iii) 'Glorious Fragments': metre and figure

So far in this chapter I have explored the role that length and repetition play in the poem, and argued that these features are related to the moving fictions it presents. [502] The repetitions are instrumental in extending the duration of the affective experience to spans sufficient to inculcate divine lessons, and, conversely, the engagingly mournful 'situation' is designed to fix and draw out the reader's attention to the full length of the poem. Poetic extension is a way of filling mortal time with thoughts of eternity: the longer the text, the longer it can keep the reader's life filled with virtuous meditation. *Night Thoughts* thus teaches a form of mental discipline, but it also needs to reach the reader's heart, which becomes in the poem the key site of conversion. This section turns from excavating the aims and didactic logic of *Night Thoughts* to consider in more detail how affective alertness and temporal plenitude are engendered by the arrangement of parts within the whole.

Almost each Night is longer than the ones before, a cumulative form in which each clearly separated section effectively repeats and extends the matter of the preceding one, so that it both copies and departs from the ones before. The Nights, therefore, are both linked by their fictional contiguity and, as separate parts, associated analogically. A similar dynamic operates at the level of lines and verse paragraphs, which can be thought of as corresponding to the time 'dealt out by Particles' in Night II (365). Since, as mortals, '[t]he present Moment terminates our sight' (362), the writing of virtue into time, and of God's name upon the reader, must fit itself to the briefest moments and work its change incrementally. Samuel Taylor Coleridge famously remarked that Young's

[502] The section heading title is taken from Night VI: 'The glorious Fragments of a Soul Immortal', VI, l. 269.

'love of point and wit' work against 'his pathos and sublimity' so that reading *Night Thoughts* 'through' becomes well-nigh impossible.[503] Given that the poem represents human consciousness as limited to mere 'particles' of time, this effect could be intentional, and Coleridge's identification of 'wit' and 'point' as qualities that interrupt the reading process is therefore worth considering.

The attribution of 'wit' to *Night Thoughts* may come as a surprise to modern readers approaching the text through the lens of sentimental literature, but the poem abounds with proverbial and paradoxical statement of ideas, reflecting a sombre form of verbal bravura. The most well-known is perhaps '*Procrastination* is the thief of time' (I, 392), but examples could be multiplied. The value of this epigrammatic style to the poem's didactic purpose is suggested by the reading instructions in Ken's *Manual*, where he advises Philotheus that '[i]n your reading Holy Scripture, especially in the Psalms, you may easily gather those short sentences which most affect you, for they are most proper for this use; and when you have learn'd them without Book, say one of them now and then as they occure to your mind, or as occasion requires, or as your devotion prompts you'.[504] Fragmented into portable pieces, the memorable and affecting sentences take on a new, second life in the 'text' of the mind. In *Night Thoughts*, 'short sentences' draw the reader in to a narrow focus as he engages with its language and sentiment and, perhaps, memorizes it or writes it down in a commonplace book, thereby encouraging the type of intensive reading evoked by Coleridge.

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[503] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Table Talk*, ed. by Carl Woodring, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP; London: Routledge, 1990), vol. i, p. 7.
[504] Ibid., pp. 26-7.

The 'point', however, can be understood in various ways. It could refer to the high proportion of end-stopped lines in the poem. As Stephen Cornford notes, the metre of *Night Thoughts* resembles that of un-rhymed but highly regular heroic couplets rather than the flexible and varied blank verse associated with Milton or, later, with Wordsworth.[505] Furthermore, the formal rhetorical figures Young uses in order to connect up his ideas tend to emphasize the limits of the individual metrical units. Metrical feet, and the phrases and ideas they encapsulate, are often linked across the caesura, or across lines, by anadiplosis, anaphora and other varieties of chiasmus in ways that seem to emphasize their separateness rather than mitigating it. Returning to Night II, some of these effects can in fact clearly be seen in the very passage in which time's blanks are discussed:

> *This* [virtue] cancels thy Complaint at once; *This* leaves
> In Act no Trifle, and no Blank in Time.
> *This* greatens, fills, immortalizes All:
> *This*, the blest Art of turning all to Gold;
> *This*, the good Heart's prerogative to raise
> A royal tribute, from the poorest Hours. (II, 82-7)

Here, the use of anaphoric repetition of a word at the start of each phrase, emphasized by italics as well as by its position, is used to unite a series of statements about virtue, forming a catalogue of its characteristics which evokes its immense transformative power. The repetition is enlivened by varying the metrical distribution and the structure of the individual phrases, namely by enjambment across the first and last pairs of lines which helps vary the tempo and allows two lines to start without '*This*' while still maintaining the rhythm established by anaphora. It also allows the construction of two

[505] Cornford, 'Introduction', p. 3.

slightly more complex phrases within the regularity of the list, so that the benefit of virtue is expressed in both its universality and its variety. Nevertheless, the end-stopped line continues to dominate; even the run-on lines (and these occur only rarely in the poem as a whole) seem to retain the closure of the traditional heroic line, which often share with Young's satirical verse distinct Popean overtones.

These particles of verse fit the miniscule span of mortal attention, but they also extend it by forcibly prolonging the attention given to each line. A more extreme example of metrical fragmentation effected by Young's use of formal rhetorical figures is found in *Night III*:

> Sweet Harmonist! and Beautiful as sweet!
> And young as beautiful! and Soft, as young!
> And Gay as soft! and Innocent as Good!
> And Happy (if aught Happy here) as Good! (III, 81-84)

If Young's intention here is to build to an emotional crescendo, the attempt fails: the linkage of ideas by anadiplosis and chiasmus seems paradoxically to break apart the lines, disrupting the iambic pentameter line and emphasizing the jerky syntax and punctuation. However, here too the 'pointed' emphasis of the individual hemistichs potentially offers an instructive reading experience. Each half-line has to overcome the weight of inertia from the stalling of the one before, which forces the reader to dwell on Narcissa's virtues, stilling his mind to the motionless state of the figure in the frontispiece who contemplates her epitaph.

In the poem as a whole, moments of intense emotion (they are numerous) are frequently signalled by this kind of exaggeratedly 'staccato' rhythm, which as in the above example is often exacerbated by a proliferation of another type of pointing, that of

exclamation and question marks, which further break up the verse by heightening the already marked divisions of line-breaks and caesurae.[506] Other effects are marshaled to intensify the effect, such as the rendering of key words in block capitals and italics, adding still more rhetorical emphasis to lines already fraught with punctuation, as in much of Night IX, where Young strives to sustain a tone of climactic sublimity suitable to the grand finale.[507] These typographical markers of affect are of course part of the stock sentimental repertoire in the mid century; however, in a verse setting, stripped of the multiple voices and the detailed social contexts of a novel, exclamatory excess performs very differently. When added to the relative metrical monotony, the redundancy of punctuation often obscures any impression of the hierarchy of sense across multiple lines; meaning must be extracted by the reader from a fog of emphases.

This in turn brings into focus, and is compounded by, the abstract nature of much of the subject matter, which is typically expressed by means of personifications, allegories and epic similes, so that abstractions such as moral qualities become active agents, as in the following passage from Night V:

> *Gold* glitters most, where *Virtue* shines no more;

[506] John Barrell and Harriet Guest suggest that '[t]he staccato movement of Young's verse – its tendency to divide into discrete aphoristic units and monitory interjections – continually concentrates attention on the present moment of utterance' and see the main effect of this as distracting the reader 'from the issue of how his sentences are logically connected'. This may be so; as I am suggesting, however, it seems designed rather to contribute to the work's didactic function and cumulatively to foster a particular form of religious consciousness. Barrell and Guest, 'On the Use of Contradiction: Economics and Morality in the Eighteenth-century Long Poem') (p. 139).

[507] See, for instance, ll. 990-997, where 'various Virtues', 'Zodiac', 'Chistian', 'Pagan', 'needful', 'opprobrious', 'Ardor', 'Light', 'Morals', 'Phaenomenon, 'Sun' and 'Star' are italicized. It is of course important to remember that when Samuel Richardson took over the printing of the *Night Thoughts* following Young's move from Hawkins to Dodsley, Young was content to allow Richardson to punctuate and capitalize the text as he saw fit. However, the dense punctuation was retained by Young in later editions and he expresses his confidence in Richardson's judgment in several letters, so that one can assume that it accorded with his general intentions for the poem (see Stephen Cornford, 'Introduction', pp. 30-31).

> As Stars from absent Suns have leave to shine.
> O what pretious Pack of Votaries
> Unkennell'd from the Prisons, and the Stews,
> Pouring, all opening in their Idol's Praise!
> All, ardent, eye each future of her Hand,
> And wide-expanding their voracious Jaws,
> Morsel on Morsel swallow down unchew'd,
> Untasted, through mad Appetite for more;
> Gorged to the throat, yet lean and ravenous still.
> Sagacious All, to trace the smallest Game,
> And bold to seize the Greatest. If (blest Chance!)
> Court-Zephyrs sweetly breath, they launch, they fly,
> O'er Just, o'er Sacred, all forbidden Ground,
> Drunk with the burning Scene of Place, or Pow'r,
> Staunch to the foot of Lucre, till they die.
> Or if for Men you take them [...] V, 966-982)

The initial metaphor here is that of money as a lesser light whose 'glitter' is only visible when the greater beam of virtue is extinguished. The characterizations of money as glittering and virtue as light are dead metaphors whose proverbial resonances render their figurative dimensions almost unnoticeable, deflecting the reader's attention straight back to the tenor. The vehicle is insisted upon, however, in the line that follows, which revives the figure by the addition of simile, 'As Stars from absent Suns have leave to shine'. Thereafter, a new, albeit related metaphor is activated, as the glitter of money becomes that not of a minor star but of a false 'Idol' worshipped by 'Pretious […] Votaries', those who in absence of any personal virtue mistake the glitter of gold for divinity. The votaries are in turn figured as a 'pack' of ravenous hounds ('unkennell'd') whose desperate 'ardent' hunger has them eyeing 'every Wafture' of their beloved mistress's hand for 'Morsels' of money, and as these fail to satisfy, hunting down each floating scrap like quarry ('Game', 'burning Scent'). These animals resemble the undisciplined spaniels of Dryden and Pope, although Young applies the simile to men rather than ideas or words and so makes the political critique implicit in Dryden and Pope overt and moral.

However, the allegory itself is as swift-moving as the figures it depicts, resembling the rapid pace of Thomson's roving muse in 'Autumn'. Those who love gold metamorphose into votaries, then hounds; in the next verse-paragraph they become men again, but marksmen whose desperation distorts their aim. Each of these figures illustrates another facet of the distortion of senses engendered by the excessive love of money, but they seem to unfold associatively rather than being directed by the particular moral Young wishes to convey, with each metaphor suggesting the next. In this sense, series of stylized, conventional allegories or extended metaphors – life as a sea voyage, moral degeneracy as incurring 'debt' and 'bankruptcy' – often seem to direct the development of the Nights, so that the associative, flowing 'argument' typical of long poems such as *The Seasons* or *The Task* is transposed onto the figurative plane. Meditations on a given topic are pegged to the allegories and metaphors by which they are enlivened, and which often seem to govern the development of the 'thoughts' rather than the other way round. However, the rapidity of the poet's allegorical fancy is framed by the controlled rhythms of the verse, and the figurative phantasmagoria both connects up the single lines and acts as a counterpoint to the choppy tempo of Young's prosody. The combination of these two distinct patterns introduces yet another delay to the reader's passage through the text.

(iv) Poetic Revolution

The gap that opens up between the strictly parcelled decasyllables and the unconstrained fancy of the poem's intensely figurative discourse, challenging the reader to correlate the two, resembles the distance between mortal circumscription and immortal

unboundedness. The poem's goal, conversion, involves the reader internalizing all the implications and facets of the Christian sacrifice, which alone can reconcile the two. Hence the description in Night VII of 'The Soul's *high Price*', that is, its immortality bestowed by Christ's sacrifice, as 'the *Mighty Hinge*, on which have turn'd/ All Revolutions' (1013-19). Similarly, in Night IV Young describes 'Religion' as a force which encompasses the worldly and the otherworldly:

> *Religion*'s All. Descending from the Skies
> To wretched Man, the Goddess in her Left
> Holds out this World, and in her Right, the *next*;
> Religion! the sole Voucher Man is Man;
> Supporter sole of Man above himself;
> Even in this Night of Frailty, Change, and Death,
> She gives the Soul a Soul that acts a God.
> *Here* is firm Footing; here is solid Rock;
> This can support us, all is Sea besides,
> Sinks under us; bestorms, and then devours.
> His Hand the good Man fastens on the Skies,
> And bids Earth rowl, nor feels her idle Whirl. (IV, 550-562)

Although *Night Thoughts* boasts an immense cast of allegorical figures, 'Religion' is represented as particularly powerful, functioning as an absolute point of reference for man, a guarantee of his existence and of Creation's, and a steadying, solidifying counterweight to their vicissitudes. The word-play in Matthew 16:18 ('upon this rock I will build my church') on 'rock' as both literal stone and 'Peter' the man, is reworked by Young in the layered characterization of personified religion as both a figure holding out 'this World' and 'the *next*' and an inanimate 'solid Rock' providing a 'firm Footing'.[508]

This double characterization accords with Religion's power to telescope multiple phenomena and meanings into a single truth, and her Archimedean locus resembles the

[508] Elsewhere in the Bible, 'rock' is one of the names of God, and in some exegetical traditions the verse is read as a statement that Jesus himself is the rock on which the Church will be built.

'hinge' of 'revolution' cited above, a counterforce to the 'Earth's idle Whirl', which allows her to unite worldly values with their divine doubles, steady 'Man' into 'Man' and provide 'Soul' with 'a Soul'. Personified religion's acts of doubling also echoes Matthew 16:19, where Jesus tells Peter 'whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven'. Religion, with dominion over both 'this World' and 'the *next*', makes the latter available to those in the former, effectively merging the two, and thereby transcends the ending that is death. In the context of Night IV, which addresses man's fear of death with the aim of 'subduing' it,[509] religion is thus the means to reach the heart and uproot the 'Dread of Death' 'deep implanted in the Breast of Man' (IV, 4-5).

The above passage does more than express allegorically the value of religion to man in overcoming the fear of death, however. It also suggests the recognition of religion's importance as a key to understanding or resolving the poem, and the trope of 'riddle' appears on a number occasions across nine Nights. In Night VII, when Lorenzo apparently asserts that 'the fam'd Athenian Porch […] Deny'd this Immortality to Man', the narrator replies (characteristically) with a paradox: 'I grant it; but affirm they prov'd it too./ A Riddle, This? Have Patience, I'll explain.' (VII, 562-566) Later on in the same 'Night' the trope of riddle and solution is repeated in a slightly different formulation, 'His [man's] Immortality alone can solve/ That darkest of Ænigmas, human Hope' (VII, 104-5).[510] Finally the trope is generalized to extend to the world and to man.

> Nothing in this World unriddles, but the next.

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[509] 'Preface' to 'Night IV', *Night Thoughts*, p. 35.

[510] For a broad discussion of the opposition of light and dark in *Night Thoughts*, see Mary S. Hall, 'On Light in Young's 'Night Thoughts'', *Philological Quarterly* 48 (1969), 452-63.

> […]
> "KNOW all; Know Infidels, – unapt to Know!
> "'Tis Immortality your Nature solves;
> "'Tis Immortality decyphers Man,
> "'And opens all the Mysteries of his Make.
> "Without it, half his Instincts are a riddle;
> "Without it, all his Virtues are a Dream: (VII, 466; 502-510)

Thus, as the reader's progress through the poem is slowed down by its 'wit' and 'point', it inculcates the 'patience' required to absorb the significance of Christ's sacrifice, which in turn unlocks the full meaning of the poem's many paradoxical utterances and reveals the true import of the books of Man and Nature.

Recognizing religion as the 'solution' to the poem also transforms the mortal time in which the reader experiences it, infusing it with immortal plenitude. In Night III the poet, who at the start of the Night berated himself for failing to 'write' Narcissa's name upon her gravestone, is intent on engraving the Christian phenomena which guarantee her salvation into the reader's consciousness. Like Rowe's ghostly correspondents, or Philander in later books, Narcissa is one of the 'Smitten Friends' who 'Are Angels sent on Errands full of Love;/ […] Ungratefull shall we grieve their hov'ring Shades,/ Which wait the Revolution in our Hearts?' (III, 292-297) The heart is the hoped site of divine 'revolution', that is, of conversion and of recognition that natural death brings eternal life. In the meantime, mortal life is nothing but disconnected 'repetitions' and the poverty-stricken soul is starved of hope in a round of worldly revolutions which seem merely repetitive:

> On cold-serv'd Repetitions He subsists,
> And in the tasteless *Present* chaws the *Past*;
> Disgusted chews, and scarce can swallow down.
> Like lavish Ancestors, his earlier Years

> Have disinherited his future Hours,
> Which starve on Oughts, and glean their former field. (III, ll. 319)

Just as in the passage on time's blanks discussed earlier, the single occurrence of enjambment seems to evoke the yawning emptiness of the present in the absence of Christian belief. Rather than a series of densely-filled moments represented by lines each 'filled' with a single end-stopped phrase, the repetitions of mortal life in the absence of death are fractured and uneven:

> For what live ever Here? – With labouring Step
> To tread our former Footsteps? Pace the Round
> Eternal? To climb Life's worn, heavy wheel,
> Which draws up nothing new? To beat, and beat,
> The beaten Track? (III, ll. 329-333)

As in Night II, '*Virtue*' provides the means of breaking this relentless cycle and escaping from the mortal time's 'track' to the progressive narrative of eternal time: 'She, wonder-working Goddess! charms, […] gives/ To Life's sick, nauseous *Iteration*, Change;/ And straitens Nature's Circle to a Line.' (III, 366-310)

The naming of the goddess Virtue brings her qualities to bear on the verse itself, which enters the cycle of mortal time, makes its repetitions meaningful, and fills in its blanks with a series of paradoxical or oxymoronic expressions of the relation between life and death, setting up a rhythm which harnesses the 'heavy wheel' of human experience to impress divine truths upon the reader. At the climax of Night III, the startling effect of paradox encapsulated within a strongly demarcated line achieves vivid effects with a series of statements based around the binary opposites of 'life' and 'death', as the poet

repeats the tenets of immortality across three pages with extraordinary intensity, for once setting up a rhythm that joins rather than separates the particles of verse:

> *Death* has no dread but what frail *Life* imparts;
> Nor *Life* true Joy, but what kind *Death* improves.
> No Bliss has *Life* to boast, till *Death* can give
> Far Greater; *Life*'s a Debtor to the *Grave*,
> Dark Lattice! letting in Eternal Day. (III, 469-473)

> Were Death deny'd, poor Man would live in vain;
> Were Death deny'd, to live would not be life;
> Were Death deny'd, even Fools would wish to die. (III, 527-9)

Metaphor allows contrasts to function as near-paradox, with the concept of immortality as the hinge which effects the dizzying reversal of the antithetical concepts of 'life' and 'death' as the poem swings from line to line between the mortal and the immortal scale. Although the 'Night' ends with no certainty that the infidel *Lorenzo* has been impressed by the performance, the narrator seems to have effected the revolution in his own heart and through the active and forceful repetition of Christian paradox to have escaped from the blinkered mortal perspective into expectations of eternity:

> When shall I die to Vanity, Pain, Death?
> When shall I die? – When shall I live for ever? (III, ll. 535-6)

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The object of this chapter has been to consider Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* as a didactic poem which encourages the reader to participate in a meditation on 'Life, Death

and Immortality'. Recognition of the importance of the missionary impulse is the 'key' to the poem's 'riddle', and allows us to address more fully some of the most difficult aspects of the poem, such as its extension, its repetitiveness, and its abrupt, exclamatory rhetoric. Young's religion is transmitted by reason but also by the affections, and the aim of the poem is to impress religious truths upon the reader's heart. Furthermore, the necessity of redemption before Judgment Day makes time of the essence in the poem, as in Night III, where the narrator aims to express the eternal truth of man's immortality within a mortal, finite span. To do this he extends the time within time by increasing the density of what Wordsworth later described as 'fancies thick',[511] inserting them into the smallest possible unit, the line, and repeating them with incantatory intensity until they wear their oxymoronic 'revolutions' into the heart. *Night Thoughts* is thus in some ways much more coherent than its repetitions and extensiveness might suggest. By inscribing religion in human time, using subdivision and repetition to multiply it towards eternity, Young is 'writing to the moment' in ways that prefigure some of the techniques that his friend Samuel Richardson would use in the affecting narrative of *Clarissa*, where 'the story' is designed 'as a vehicle only to the instruction' and extended to great 'length' in order to fit in all the emotions experienced in the course of it and thereby 'inculcate upon the human mind, under the guise of an amusement, the great lessons of Christianity'.[512]

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[511] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. by M.H. Abrams, Stephen Gill, and Jonathan Wordsworth (New York; London: Norton, 1979), VII, ll.564-6.

[512] Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa; or, a History of a Young Lady*, ed. by Angus Ross (London: Penguin, 2004), pp0. 1494, 1498. Young corresponded with Richardson both before and after the publication of *Clarissa*, and his comments on the novel show that he recognised that the two were 'in the same way of thinking?' sharing 'virtue and religion' as their 'point of view'. No. 158, Young to Richardson, [17?] Dec 1744, in *Correspondence*, pp. 192-3.

CONCLUSION

At the start of this dissertation it was proposed that re-examining important eighteenth-century non-narrative long poems from the perspective of the literary and wider cultural discourses of earlier decades would help us better to make sense of their formal arrangements, and to recognize more clearly the meanings such forms make available. In Part I, inquiries into key writings of Dennis, Addison and Pope suggested that the translation of greatness of topic into extensive text was often attended in this period by self-consciousness regarding the forms and techniques involved, by a relative subordination of narrative plot, and by a concern with attracting or even creating readers capable of understanding those forms and techniques and thereby of comprehending vast ideas. In Part II, chapters on each of the three long poems explored their formal arrangements from various perspectives in order to demonstrate, in the first instance, that they are deliberately and intricately shaped, as wholes, to achieve particular effects. Despite the lack of detailed narrative plot the poems nonetheless are designed with temporal sequence in mind – that of their readers' progress through the poems – and as such their structures are effective as experience, which works not just to inform but to transmit literary pleasure, scientific knowledge, polite connoisseurship, religious virtue and so on. The extent of the poems effectively gives the poets the time (or space) to habituate readers to their particular methods, styles and forms, and to shape them so as to be receptive to their songs.

In focusing primarily on how the length of these poems transmits greatness – figurative and literal – this dissertation has, of course, largely subordinated the poems' multiple parts to their function within the wholes. Nonetheless, the suggestion in

Longinus that the sublime acts instantaneously, although it is best multiplied and extended into 'trains', concedes value to parts as well as to their whole. Therefore, readers might well choose to read 'partially', inattentively or briefly, and in more modern texts allowances are made accordingly. Thus Addison's essayistic reading of *Paradise Lost* starts by applying neoclassical critical standards to the whole before breaking it up into multiple passages or beauties. Similarly, the apparatus of Pope's *Iliad* both facilitates the apprehension of the poem as a unified artwork and a single, extended narrative and, by means of the commentary and thematic indices, permits it to be read for beauties instead of for the plot. While the coherence of the work remains a paramount concern in the apparatus, Pope thus seems to acknowledge that readers may feel differently. Equally, in *An Essay on Criticism* and *An Essay on Man*, Pope might be said to institute a two-tier system of meaning, offering easily-accessible collections of brilliant couplets and striking sentiments, whilst a greater, more elaborate sense is developed over the course of the full poem.

This double focus is, I think, crucial to bear in mind when thinking about the long eighteenth-century poem. To keep an eye on both parts and wholes allows the arguments developed in this dissertation to complement rather than contest earlier work on *The Seasons*, *The Pleasures of Imagination* and *Night Thoughts*, including the articles by Barrell and Guest, and Terry. These have largely chosen to emphasize the parts over the wholes, noting the poems' amenity to 'dipping' and other forms of selective reading, demonstrating that 'transitions' or 'digressions' were often considered as independent features, and highlighting the fact that the poems were widely excerpted in numerous 'beauties' anthologies and miscellanies, where large-scale formal structure would in any

case have been lost. However, to think of these poems *solely* as fabrics of contradictions, digressions, and transitions, or to study them in disconnected excerpts, is to succumb to partiality.

The history of their publication, if nothing else, demands that we consider them as large-scale compositions, since they only began to be anthologized commercially several decades after their initial publications. As William St Clair explains, monopoly trade practices up until the 1770s allowed printers to keep strict control over the reproduction of the works to which they held copyrights.[513] For their first audiences, excerpts in periodical book reviews would often have been as close as readers could get to recently-published long poems without setting eyes on the 'official' copies. Even for *The Seasons* and *Night Thoughts*, this meant that the smallest sections circulating in the legal market would have been full Seasons or Nights, most of which are over one thousand lines long. Such dimensions leave the reader the opportunity to read at length or briefly, paying attention to the large-scale poetic whole or to shorter parts.

Despite the allure of the miscellany to recent scholars, then, the long poems we have been considering demand that we look beyond simple dichotomies and single modes of reading. For all the modernity of the original texts (with their articulated apparatuses) and of the secondary modes (reviews, commonplace books, etc.) by which they were transmitted, I have been arguing that they must nonetheless be read in light of conceptions of 'leviathan' greatness found in classical and biblical traditions, albeit adapted and reoriented by Milton and Hobbes in the seventeenth century, and by Dennis

[513] William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), pp. 84-102. There are some exceptions to this generalization, namely Oliver Goldsmith's *The Beauties of English Poesy*, 2 vols (1767) in *ECCO* [accessed November 2009], which includes the first two Nights of *Night Thoughts* – again, this is not exactly a brief excerpt.

in the eighteenth. Such traditions set a long poetic form, the epic, at the top of the generic hierarchy, and balance the distortions and excesses of greatness against its moral grandeur. The high value accorded to text in both classical and Christian (especially Protestant) traditions feeds into eighteenth-century theories of poetic efficacy. At the very least, therefore, *The Seasons*, *The Pleasures of Imagination* and *Night Thoughts* are owed renewed readings, and the manner in which they were read in their heyday, from the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth, bears further investigation.

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